Affectionately yours

Byrd Wilson

A

MEMORIAL

OF THE

REV. BIRD WILSON, D.D., LL.D.

LATE

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY

IN THE

GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BY

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"O, Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect, in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son, Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

TO THE

ALUMNI OF THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

AND TO

THOSE MORE ESPECIALLY WHO HAVE BEEN THE FAVORED, PRIVILEGED PUPILS

OF THE

REV. BIRD WILSON, D.D., LL.D.,

LATE EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY,

THIS HUMBLE ATTEMPT AT A MEMORIAL OF ONE SO GREAT AND GOOD

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

ONE OF THEIR NUMBER.

PREFACE.

It having been suggested to the present writer, that he should attempt a sketch of the life and character of the late Dr. Wilson, the work was undertaken under an oppressive sense of his own incompetency for the task.

But having been the almost constant inmate of that good man's house during three years of Seminary study, and having also been blessed with the privilege of ministering unto him, as occasion offered, during the distressing illness which ended in his removal hence, by God; he enjoyed the rare opportunity of becoming familiar with the daily life of this distinguished son of the Church, in a degree, perhaps, accorded to none other.

It has been a labor of love, thus to retrace, as memory could suggest them, some of the steps of a long life of eminent greatness, and of uninterrupted usefulness.

Would, that in dismissing these pages to the Press, the author could be permitted to feel that he had been enabled to do aught in cancelling a debt of gratitude, which has been the accumulated product of many years of kind interest, and a truly fraternal regard for the promotion of his own highest welfare.

Aside from the authorities quoted in the notes, the author has been dependent mainly upon his own recollections, and a few delicate suggestions of the beloved niece of Dr. Wilson,—the sole connecting link which now remains unbroken by the hand of death.

Two Sermons, from the pen of Dr. Wilson, are added with a view of enhancing very materially the value of this Memorial, and also as specimens of the thoroughness and completeness of his preparation for the Pulpit.

They will be found to be clear, earnest, and instructive; well illustrating the principle that the most consistent practice is ever based upon a definite, intelligent, Scriptural faith. The first in order is a masterly one, particularly as a model of Biblical interpretation. It is a style of Sermons eminently characteristic of the Primitive Church, and of the ablest Divines of the Church of England, and one far more attractive to the intelligent laity of the present day than is generally surmised. And by a gradual return to it, our people would be taught, what should be the great aim of all preaching, rightly to comprehend the word of life, but

an end seldom attained by the fanciful flights, or commonplace generalities (not to say puerilities) which characterize too large a share of modern sermonizing, and in which the elements of sober, manly, thoughtful study would seem to have had but little part or lot.

The clergy are ordained teachers, and although debarred from none of the treasures of a chastened imagination, a cultivated taste, or the beauties of the most finished literature of any age, yet, all these are to be valued and employed only as subsidiary to the great work of building up God's people in His true faith and fear.

A volume of great value to our Theological literature might be drawn from the manuscript Sermons of Dr. Wilson. At present we are necessarily restricted in the selection.

Philadelphia, 1864.

A MEMORIAL

OF THE

REV. BIRD WILSON, D.D., LL.D.

The oft-repeated remark, that but little of thrilling interest is to be found in the lives of literary men, has become well-nigh stereotyped. To the lovers of the new and the incredulous this must needs be a sad defect, an almost insuperable objection; more especially at a period like the present, when martial prowess, deeds of fearful daring, and the almost daily acquaintance with scenes of carnage and blood, seem to have thrown utterly into the shade the virtues and amenities of a quiet, retired, and peaceful life; which, assuredly, in the sight of Heaven, are of far higher value,

and for whose speedy return, it behooves us all ever to cry mightily unto God.

There is, and ever must be in the life of the student, an air of sameness. *His* battles are with forces of which a bustling world knows and cares to know but little. *His* victories are triumphs over difficulties and doubts which have baffled others in the campaign for truth. But they are noiseless, quiet victories, awakening no public plaudits—the sources of gratulation to himself alone; or if, perchance, the feeling extend beyond self to others, it is only to the limited band of co-workers, who have watched his progress, and now rejoice in the complete success of his painful labors.

Fortunately, for their own good, all are not of this Athenian class, caring for nothing but "to hear or tell of some new thing." There are those who seek their true and lasting peace in the more retired and quiet paths of life. With some, this is the bent of natural inclination,—thus has it always been with them; while with others, it is the result of

chastened feelings, and a truer appreciation "of things seen and temporal,"—a juster estimate of human life.

They have been jostled by the crowd—have eddied hither and thither in the whirlpool of excitement—have grown tired of the feverish strife, and the constant recurrence of some new and absorbing object of interest—and, like thoughtful Mary, are now to be found rather at the feet of the great Master, drinking in lessons of heavenly wisdom, and making careful preparation for the hour when, to them, time, with its ten thousand distractions, shall be no more. And if this be so, then must it be evident that the latter is "the more excellent way;" and that sooner or later, its attractions shall be seen and realized:—

> "When from our better selves we have too long
> Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
> Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
> How gracious! how benign its solitude!"

It is the quiet, tranquil haven, whither we are all found tending, and which we shall

hail as a happy exchange for the raging billows, and boisterous tempests of a restless deep.

Such as have been described, are to be numbered among the "simple men" whom good old Izaak Walton so characteristically describes,—an expression, against whose misapplication he enters his ready and most heartfelt protest. It is not the absence of one single manly grace or noble endowment, as some would dream, but that gentle quietness, "that harmlessness which was usually found in the primitive Christians, who were quiet men, and followers of peace; men, that were so simply wise, as not to sell their consciences to buy riches, and with them, vexation and a fear to die; such simple men as lived in those days when there were fewer lawyers; when men might have a lordship conveyed to them in a piece of parchment no bigger than your hand, though several sheets will not do it safely in this wiser age."

Such men have all the *spirit*, upon which

this world doats so fondly. It is the mainspring of their character,—giving tone, and energy, and completeness to all they do or may attempt. But, the difference consists in this, that the harsher features of that spirit have been softened, aye, and ennobled too, by the hallowing influences of divine grace. That spirit still exists, only its temper is changed; no longer betraying its presence to the worldly vision, in worldly types and manifestations. Human nature, in the persons of such, seems to have realized the beautiful vision of a firm and lasting peace, so inimitably described by the prophet, and applied, in anticipation, to the church of Christ, "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

In other words, the stern, rugged, and repulsive traits, which, in their coarser expressions in life, the world dignifies as spirit, manliness, or heroism, are all veiled beneath an

overspreading, all-pervading atmosphere of gentle, child-like love, which, in its perfect development, is the highest type we have, the most endearing and exalted conception we can form of the blessed nature even of God Himself.

Well must it ever be, then, to turn away from the tinselled specimens of human greatness, which some particular age or passion has canonized, to those who wear more of the livery of every-day men, whose greatness is of too spiritual a character to arrest the gaze of the superficial and time-serving; but who are destined to live on in the thoughts and affections of men, long after the idols of to-day have ceased to receive the adulations of their favorites.

To the class, of which Walton was so beautiful and endearing an instance, is to be added the venerated name of the subject of this unpretending Memorial. He reflected all the features of the highest description of his class. A man of quiet tastes,—quiet habits,—quiet

pursuits,—of a deep, but quiet love. One, known fully, only by the comparative few who were so favored as to have been brought within the quiet circle in which he moved; and by them, known only to be revered for his distinguished abilities, the purity and saintliness of his character, for his meek and noiseless, but winning affection.

Any work intended to sketch the history of Dr. Wilson would be incomplete, as well as lose much of its interest and value, without, at least, a passing notice of his honored father, who occupied so distinguished a position in the revolutionary era of our country;—a period when all the varied talent, and that too of the most brilliant order, seemed to have been consecrated to the mighty work of building up a government which should deserve, which should *command* the respect and confidence of the entire civilized world. And now, when from the sadly altered condition of a once united and happy republic, the disposition is shown on all hands, to go back to the

history of that early period, (and it is one of the most hopeful of signs,) narrowly scrutinizing the great principles by which they were governed, and the motives which actuated the public heart, it seems to be peculiarly fitting, that the names of father and son should be associated in an undying union.

James Wilson was born in Scotland in the year 1742. His father was a highly respectable farmer, and from letters still in the possession of his granddaughter, it would appear that the family were in very moderate circumstances, plain and simple in their habits and tastes, but withal, possessed of that native refinement and strength, both of character and intellect, which we find so generally prevalent in the eastern portion of our country, where the state of society presents so many striking points of resemblance to that of Scotland.

Doubtless, the early manifestation of decided talent, and the love of study, pointed his family to himself as one who should re-

ceive a finished education at whatever cost, and despite the personal sacrifices they might be called upon to make to that end. At all events, we find that he was educated at Glasgow, St. Andrew's, and Edinburgh, under the supervision of some of the highest lights of Scottish literature.

Having completed his education, he seems to have turned his thoughts toward America, as the most promising and attractive field for a young man, absolutely dependent upon his own exertions and resources, in which to begin the great battle of human life. Reaching Philadelphia some time during the year 1766, he became connected with the college in that city in the capacity of tutor, where he made for himself an enviable reputation by the extent and accuracy of his classical attainments. He had recourse, doubtless, to this plan, as numbers since his day have done, to acquire the requisite means for the prosecution of the study of some one of the learned professions.

His choice was that of the law, the study

of which he pursued in the office of the celebrated John Dickenson. His first field of practice was at Reading, Pennsylvania, and subsequently at Carlisle, where his studious devotion to his work, and his eminent ability in its discharge, soon secured for him not only an extensive practice, but a commanding social position also.

Mr. Wilson had made America the country of his adoption. All the ties, save those of family, which bound him to the Old World, were severed. The land of his choice had shown her appreciation of his worth, respected his talents, and had thrown wide open to him the avenues to fame and affluence. And hence, when that trying period came which was to end, as but few at the outset anticipated it would, in the utter and irrevocable severance of the Colonies from the Mother Country, he had no scruples, no misgivings as to the part which he was, in duty, required to perform in the great and sanguinary drama which was about to open.

He had sought and found a new home. To its defense and support all his energies, in all their strength and freshness, were clearly due. His lot had been cast with us whether for weal or woe. And when the moment came for the drawing of that line which should separate the friends of a nation, struggling for freedom and glory, from the advocates of a servile continuance of the reign of vassalage and oppression, he, discarding the prejudices of a foreign education, and ignoring the claims of his native land, gave himself fully and unreservedly to the work of sustaining, by his counsels and example, that noble band who had dared to raise their feeble arms against one of the most powerful of nations. They had appealed solemnly to God for the rectitude of their intentions, and with an unshaken faith trusted to His providence to bring them in safety through the conflict.

In 1775 Mr. Wilson was elected to Congress. He was one of the original signers of

the Declaration of Independence, where his name now stands, associated with those of men of whom America will have reason to be proud so long as "she shall have a name to live." To these distinguished honors others were soon added, and all pointing to him as one of the most prominent of that bright galaxy of intellect and moral worth.

In 1777 he sat in the convention called to frame the Constitution; nay, more, he was one of the committee of five by whom the American Magna Charta was actually drafted; and from that hour to this, the highest judicial tribunal of our land has signalized its deep sense of the grave importance of their labors, by its constant reference, upon all disputed questions of interpretation, to the recorded opinions of those noble sages who had devoted all the might of their brilliant, cultivated intellects to its original construction.

In revelling amid the bright memories of those golden days of the nation's history, how often must the melancholy "utinam" be

uttered from many an honest and patriotic heart, Oh! that such men were "lived over again!"

In the labors of the convention above referred to, Mr. Wilson was associated with the following distinguished delegation from Pennsylvania, viz.: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Mifflin, Robert Morris, George Clymer, Thomas Fitzsimmons, Jared Ingersoll, and Gouverneur Morris.

For six out of the twelve years, between 1775 and the call of the convention of 1787, Mr. Wilson was a member of Congress. In the History of the Constitution of the United States, by George Ticknor Curtis, its distinguished author bears the following testimony to the part performed by Mr. Wilson, in reference to the adoption of the Constitution: "This great idea of representative government was, in fact, the aim of all Mr. Wilson's exertions; and when the Constitution was formed, he enforced the idea in the Convention of Pennsylvania with singular power.

His speech in that body is one of the most comprehensive and luminous commentaries on the Constitution that has come down to us from that period. It drew from Washington a high encomium, and it gained the vote of Pennsylvania for the new government against the ingenious and captivating objections of its opponents."*

"It drew from Washington a high encomium," says Mr. Curtis, in which he may allude to a remark of that great man which has descended traditionally, somewhat in this wise. Washington is said to have made the remark, suggested, in all probability, by the eloquent speech alluded to, "that the Convention to frame the Constitution of the United States was made up of the wisest men in America, and that among the wisest of them was James Wilson." His grandchild having heard this anecdote from her father, repeated it, upon a certain occasion, to her uncle, Dr.

* History of the Constitution of the United States, vol. i. p. 464. See also vol. ii. 520–522.

Wilson, and asked him if it was true. That venerable man, with his characteristic modesty, simply replied, "I believe it to be true." That such a complimentary remark should have been made, as thus reported, we can readily believe, more especially as we have Washington's elevated opinions of Mr. Wilson's character and labors recorded in a letter, which shall be quoted presently. An additional high mark of his confidence is to be found in the fact that Washington placed his own nephew, Bushrod, under him as his legal preceptor, the distinguished scholar living to succeed his distinguished teacher as a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In 1786 Mr. Wilson was elected a member of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, a body which has always maintained a very high character for the purity and learning of its members. The certificate of membership is signed,

B. Franklin, *President.*
John Ewing, } *Vice-Presidents.*
William White, }

In the year 1789 he was appointed one of the associate justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. The commission bears date the 29th of December. It is engrossed on parchment, signed G. Washington, and bears the great seal of the United States, with the thirteen stars clustered above the head of the eagle, forming the body of the sun, from whence rays of light emanate in all directions. This document was accompanied by a letter, in the handwriting of a secretary or clerk, but signed G. Washington. The letter is well worthy of transcription for several reasons. It is dated, "*United States*, Sept. 30th, 1789," the day after the issue of the commission, and is addressed "to the Honorable James Wilson, Esquire."

"Sir:—I experience peculiar pleasure in giving you notice of your appointment to the office of Associate Judge, in the Supreme Court of the United States.

"Considering the judicial system as the chief pillar upon which our national govern-

ment must rest, I have thought it my duty to nominate for the high offices in that department, such men as I conceived would give dignity and lustre to our national character. And I flatter myself that the love which you bear to our country, and a desire to promote general happiness, will lead you to a ready acceptance of the enclosed commission, which is accompanied with such laws as have passed relative to your office.

"I have the honor to be, etc."

The following sketch of Judge Wilson's characteristic reply is also preserved.

"Sir:—Your commission appointing me one of the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, and your very obliging letter with which it was accompanied, I have had the honor of receiving.

"Be assured, sir, that I entertain a just sense of the delicate and pleasing manner in which you describe the motives and the objects of your choice.

"Permit me to add, and I hope I do it with justice and without vanity, that you are correct in your conjecture concerning the principles which lead me to an acceptance of your commission. I have taken the qualification prescribed by the law, and hold myself in readiness to perform the duties of my office.

"I have the honor, etc."

The above is addressed "to the President of the United States," and bears date October 8th, 1787.

The letter, above quoted, transmitting the commission, may well settle forever the point as to the actual standing of Judge Wilson. It emanates from a source, as we all know, whence mere idle flatteries and fashionable commonplace compliments were never wont to have their origin.

General Washington was proverbially a man of but few words, and those most warily chosen. They were never words of mere compliment, which some are given to ex-

change so currently, and which are soon learned to be rated at their true value. He felt most deeply the grave responsibility devolved upon him in the selection of good and competent men to fill an office which must ever be regarded as the very highest of all, within the gift of the Chief Magistrate.

The bare appointment, therefore, is in itself evidence of the eminent standing of Judge Wilson. But the honor, great as it was in itself, is exalted fourfold when we take in connection with it the flattering terms in which it was pressed upon the favorite nominee. And aside from this, which was the primary object in the reproduction of the letter, it possesses peculiar value and an especial interest for us, when we recur to it, as we may and should, as a proof of what should be our estimate, in all coming time, of a leading branch of the Government, which is the most important of any. Washington refers to "the judicial system as *the Chief Pillar* upon which our national government must rest," in which

few, but solemn and pregnant words, are conveyed at once a weighty admonition to those with whom may rest the responsibility of the appointing and confirming power, as well as to those who, as citizens, are called upon to bow with reverence to the decisions of a tribunal, than which we have none higher. To the one party it counsels grave deliberation, much caution, and an entire freedom from all political bias, or personal friendships even, in the selection, that we may have over us men of singular probity, of undoubted lore, whose hands are pure and can adjust the trembling scales with an impartial accuracy. To the other, to the party of the second part, to us, as citizens, bound to obey and to uphold the law, it counsels reverence for its august decisions, and a peaceful acquiescence in all its requirements. Be our private views or predilections what they may, all must be surrendered, utterly abandoned, when once our line of duty shall have been clearly marked out for us by an authority which has

no earthly superior, with which alone it rests to determine what is law, and what our bounden duty under it. It is a dangerous experiment indeed, which would make light of such a department of our Government, which would do aught to undermine the deep reverence we have been educated from early childhood to cherish for all its solemn decisions. When such a court, entrusted with such vital interests, both personal and national, shall have become corrupt, incompetent, or poisoned by party affiliations, or, whenever the body of our people shall have ceased to yield a reverent, cheerful submission to its wise determinations, we will have reached an appalling crisis in our national history, and may ruefully anticipate the day when it shall have become established, beyond all peradventure, that the theory of popular government has proved at best but a cruel fallacy.

The venerable Henry Clay, upon the floor of the Senate, on one occasion, pronounced

the Supreme Court to be one of the few great conservative elements of our Government.

Let us, then, guard well against the approach of aught which may tend in any way or to any degree, either to vitiate or to destroy that conservative character. But a greater even than he, the immortal Washington, in words of most singular, not to say prophetic, significance, speaks of that venerable body not as a pillar only, but as "*the Chief Pillar* on which our national government must rest." Let us beware, then, of the destruction, of the undermining, of the weakening even, of that mighty prop; lest the whole beautiful fabric shall crumble in ruins about us, and we become a by-word, and a reproach among the nations of the earth.

There were other positions still, occupied by Judge Wilson, which attested the general appreciation of his worth as a man of unquestionable ability, tried integrity, and great executive talent.

In 1782, or thereabouts, he had been ap-

pointed by the President and Supreme Executive Council, a counsellor and agent for Pennsylvania, in the controversy between that State and the State of Connecticut, relating to certain lands within the charter boundaries of Pennsylvania, but claimed by Connecticut. The decision was in favor of Pennsylvania. He had also a commission from Louis XVI., still preserved among his papers, as Advocate General for the French government, in the United States; "an office, the duties of which were both arduous and delicate."

It can be readily understood from the conspicuous positions occupied by him, that Judge Wilson's associations with the leading great men of America must have been both frequent and intimate. This is abundantly evident from the fragments of correspondence still preserved. There are letters from such men as Gen. Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, Paul Jones, Gen. St. Clair, who wrote him a very interesting

description of the capitulation at Yorktown; from Bishop White, and others. This list embraces persons only whose names, very naturally, made an impression while hurriedly glancing over his papers,—a list which might be very materially extended, were it necessary.

With Mr. (subsequently the venerated Bishop) White, his relations from early manhood on through life, were of the most intimate, affectionate, and confidential character. It looks oddly enough to us of this generation, to see that hoary prelate addressed familiarly as "Dear Billy." We can scarcely bring ourselves to realize that he could ever have been otherwise than as we have seen him in the discharge of his holy functions, and at whose approach, "all rejoiced to do him reverence." And, were it not intrenching upon the delicacy and reserve which attach to the confidential letters of two young men, who were accustomed, without the shadow of restraint, to unbosom to each other their every feeling,

care, or anxiety; it were easy to draw from their correspondence, matter which would afford the fund for no little amusement.

There is a passage in one of the letters referred to, which I shall take the liberty of quoting from, for its vivid description of one of the masters of his profession—to whom, Bishop White was often heard to allude in his later years, as possessed of oratorical powers never since equalled. It is his description of the celebrated David Garrick. The letter is written from London, under date of Feb. 14th, 1772. "The greatest phenomenon I have seen in England," says he, "is Mr. Garrick. I thought it impossible for human powers to reach so far. The other day I saw him in Hamlet, which is one of his best characters. If a painter could draw him, following his father's ghost off the stage, it would make the best picture I ever saw; but I think it impossible to represent his attitude, and the passions of his countenance exactly. No doubt you have often admired a passage in this play,

(Act II., scene 6th,) which begins thus: 'I have of late, wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth,' etc. etc. Now, figure to yourself the most graceful man you ever saw, with a better pronunciation than you ever heard, repeating that passage, and still your idea will be defective; for you cannot help thinking of him as an actor; but in Garrick, there is nothing like an actor, except that he stands upon a stage. The closet interview with his mother was the most admired. Every spectator must have felt the horrors which Shakspeare intended to excite by it."

In now drawing this sketch to a close, one event remains to be noticed. It is Judge Wilson's comparatively early, and speaking from an earthly stand-point, we might be tempted to say, his premature decease, at the age of 56 years. This event occurred while on his circuit in North Carolina, and in the discharge of his official functions. He closed his life on earth, at Edenton, on the 28th day of August, 1798.

"As a lawyer and judge, Mr. Wilson was eminent for talent and integrity. In private life he was courteous, kind, and hospitable. His political and legal disquisitions are extant in three volumes, and much esteemed."*

Pennsylvania had reason to be proud of her adopted son; and throughout our land, so long as that spirit is cherished which gave birth to a nation designed by God, as we humbly trust, to fulfil a great, noble, and glorious mission, shall his name be held in grateful and undying remembrance.

The history of the period on which we have thus dwelt, is read amiss by such as seek to draw therefrom the materials only for vapid, wordy, noisy declamation.

Nor is it used to much better purpose by those whose only aim shall be to gratify the pride of family, and where, it may be, there can be no other claim than that of bare descent from men, whose sterling virtues they

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* Encyclopedia Americana, vol. xiii. pp. 199, 200.

have ceased long since to emulate. Far, very far from it.

Our country has her shield of honor, upon whose golden plates are inscribed those imperishable names which are bound up with the nation's history, and unexampled prosperity, at least, up to the sad and most mysterious period in which our lot is cast. And before these, who, out of pure love for her, would put forth the helping hand, as instruments, under God, in bringing her back again to her first glory, we hold up that shield with all its sacred memories of those immortalized thereby, in the hope, and with the prayer, that with the enkindling anew of the same devoted and unselfish spirit which burned in their breasts, we may trace the first, faint dawnings of a brighter day,—a day whose glorious sun shall never go down until the nation's work be done, and she be ready to account in heaven for the untold blessings of which she has been made the favored, but, too often, the ungrateful recipient.

The preceding sketch of one of the great lights of our national history has been attempted only as a most fitting introduction to the more extended notice of his son, for the delineation of whose character this work has been mainly undertaken.

We are compelled to regret, at the outset, the scarcity of the materials left on which to draw, and are very sensibly reminded, as was hinted in the first few pages of this volume, that in so quiet, uniform a life, whose even tenor was scarce ever disturbed, there must of necessity be but few salient points of commanding public interest.

It is one of the cases in which the inborn tastes of a man, and the state of life to which God had called him, seem to have run in concentric circles, to have corresponded in every particular, so much so, that it would be a difficult problem, indeed, to settle how far his quiet, gentle impulses may have determined the choice of his position, as well as have given tone and hue to his public life in carry-

ing out the objects of his choice; as, on the contrary, how far the unvarying sameness of the duties of his position was reflected back, strengthening and confirming what appeared to be a constituent element of his nature.

But, taking the bent of that nature, and the positions, which in God's providence he actually occupied, into consideration, he was pre-eminently "the right man in the right place." And here another remark suggests itself well deserving of our notice.

I refer to a disposition, far too general, because a proof of great ignorance or weakness, or both combined,—the disposition to underrate, to pass by as of no account, the faithful and untiring labors of men whose path runs side by side with none of the noisy avenues of trade or politics, where "men most do congregate," paths utterly untrodden by, and almost unknown to, the stirring, restless multitudes to whom society at large is mainly indebted for its prevailing tastes, fashions, and opinions. All beyond their own ex-

cited circle, are the heavy plodders of this world, whose life is regarded as a sort of intellectual treadmill. Such men, they argue, could never fill a position carrying with it an extended popular influence, and hence it is regarded as a most fortunate circumstance indeed for them, that in the orderings of this world, some quiet nooks are left into which these may creep, and there drag out a not inglorious, but, at the best, a but second-rate existence.

Of the solid, varied talents and attainments of such, of their quiet usefulness in training others, it may be, for the great work of life, no account is taken; and they are known, appreciated, and honored only by the few who have ceased to be amused, like children, with the tinsel and glitter of a world too often occupied in chasing mere empty phantoms.

No one capable of forming an intelligent estimate of the talents, of the knowledge, and of the honorable and distinguished positions occupied by Dr. Wilson, could, for one

single moment, conjecture that he was an illustration of the class just described. The only possible point of resemblance between the two, would be the quietness of the spheres in which he was called to labor. But there is a growing disposition thus to ignore the claims of an unpretending, self-retiring class, against which it becomes all reflecting persons to enter their earnest, solemn protest, because the fruitful source of deep injustice to those whose true position in life must sooner or later be felt and acknowledged.

It has been well said by one who was the companion in labor of Dr. Wilson for nearly thirty years, and himself one of the ripest scholars of our land and age,* "that the son inherited his father's talents, and in due time made himself equally conspicuous."

Let us then address ourselves to the task of noting some of the scattered waymarks which have been set up along the journey of

* The Rev. Dr. Turner's Sermon, Commemorative of Dr. Wilson.

a great and good man; resting assured, that if we can find but little of wild romance on the way, we shall find, most unquestionably, what is far better, viz.: hints and lessons for the conduct of our own lives, which, if duly heeded and improved, shall entitle us also to rank among those who have glorified God, by doing good in their generation, for whom is reserved the animating welcome, "Servant of God! well done!"

Bird Wilson was born at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, on the 8th of January, 1777. Of the incidents of his childhood and early youth but few traces now remain, and yet, though few, they are of such a nature as give the clue to his character, from his tenderer years onward through life. These incidents are derived chiefly from the recollections of a domestic of the family, of reliable character, but one whose prejudices were very decidedly in favor of the brother, a person who was of a far more ardent and lively temperament.

From her statement it would appear that

the same quiet, in-door sort of character which marked his riper years, was characteristic of his childhood also. While his companions were abroad, indulging in the ruder sports of boyhood on the open common, he sought his own pleasure rather within the home circle, and in the immediate society of his parents.

One other fact is to be noticed in this connection, which betrays not only the same gentleness and quietness of spirit, but also a degree of precocious manliness and reliability of character but seldom found in one so young. It is this. That to him alone was accorded the privilege of having his books and playthings in his father's office, as also of being the constant companion of his father, even when called upon in consultation upon matters either of public or private business, the details of which were strictly confidential. And even after he had reached an age when communications of such a nature could not possibly have been made without his being a

party to the knowledge of them, at least; yet, no objection was ever made to his presence, as of one who might either ignorantly, heedlessly, or wilfully divulge what was never intended to be repeated in the public ear. A very marked proof, indeed, of a stability and ripeness of character, often looked for in vain among those whose long and intimate associations with the world should have taught a cautious silence, a prudent reserve.

He graduated from the College (now the University) of Pennsylvania, in 1792, at the very early age of fifteen years. He at once applied himself to the study of the law, and was admitted to practice at the bar, at Philadelphia, his certificate bearing date March 13th, 1797, just after entering upon his twenty-first year, that being the youngest limit allowed by the law.

He was soon assigned a position of trust and responsibility in the office of the Commissioner of Bankrupt Law, and at the age of twenty-five years he was appointed the

President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, in what was then known as the seventh circuit, comprising the counties of Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Bucks, if not others. At the period of his elevation to the bench, it was the first known instance of the appointment of so young a man. Putting the above dates together, it would appear that he could not have practiced at the bar for more than four short years.

Any person familiar with him in his later years, would readily infer, without any cotemporary evidence, that he must have been a *lawyer*, in contradistinction to the mere *advocate*,—a very marked, just, useful, and flattering distinction. As a *science*, he had made himself master of the law;—was entirely familiar with all its great, leading principles; and he was distinguished, chiefly, for the clearness and soundness with which he applied those principles to the cases which might be brought before him, and by which eternal principles of truth and equity they should be decided.

But we could never fancy in him the popular advocate, of great power only in swaying the judgments of a jury, carrying them with him away from the great landmarks of the case by popular harangues, addressed to the passions rather than to the understanding; and thus succeeding, in what to some is a most marvellous achievement indeed, in "making the worse appear the better reason."

For such misuses of what is called forensic ability, he was utterly unfitted by the cool, deliberate, positive, and demonstrative character of his mind,—to say nothing of his manly aversion to aught which might savor of low truckling; or of the conscientious views of duty both to God and man, which were his great, animating principles through life.

He had not a single element of the popular orator, in the modern, but often most erroneous appropriation of that word. What might prove merely ornamental or attractive, or capable of fanciful interpretation, made no

impression upon his mind. Nor would he consent to abuse the understandings of others, by tendering to them what his own mind rejected as weak, puerile, or unworthy. He looked rather to the solid groundwork, to the legal merits of his case; convinced, that if lacking these essential elements to success, the case was unworthy of his prosecution. And, doubtless, in the estimation of many a jury, he has been stripped of all his laurels by some superficial tyro of the law, while by the judge, who has long since learned to hold in utter contempt the mere senseless tricks of rhetoric, so called, he has been listened to with interest and attention, which is the highest tribute to professional completeness which possibly could be offered.*

Knowing nothing of the actual character of his practice, nor yet of the persons by whom

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* Since the above was written I have been led to suppose that he had never argued a case before a jury. The opinion as to what he would have done in such a case, remains the same.

he was employed, I should hazard but little in the assertion, that it was that kind of practice in which deep and accurate legal lore was the grand prerequisite; and that his clients were persons who knew how to discriminate between the solid and the mere superficial in human acquirements. And, as a striking proof of his peculiar and complete fitness for the bench, one fact alone need be mentioned. It is this. That throughout his entire judicial career, but one decision ever made by him was reversed by a court having appellate jurisdiction. And even in that case, the reversal was owing to the after-production of a document which Judge Wilson had never seen;—a document which so changed the whole character of the case, as virtually to render it a different one from that which he had adjudicated; so that in point of fact, there was really no reversal whatever.

We now reach an event which, in an indirect way, had the effect of changing the whole current of Judge Wilson's after-life. I can

but imperfectly recall the circumstances as they were once casually told me,—but at a time when it never occurred to me that they might possess peculiar interest in unfolding the history of Dr. Wilson.

A murder had been committed in Delaware County, near the site of the present beautiful and flourishing town of Media. The young man implicated in the charge was of highly respectable family connections. The circumstances of the murder were as aggravated as they were susceptible of full and complete proof, leaving no room to doubt the guilt of the defendant.

The case came up for trial before Judge Wilson; and in the course of its prosecution some painful, harrowing family scenes were witnessed, almost convulsing even the agonized spectators; and, as a matter of course, making a deep impression upon the Judge, whose native, refined, and delicate kindness of heart, no one who had ever known him could possibly mistake.

The trial ended with the verdict of wilful murder, and at the proper time the Judge performed the sad, necessary, but painful duty which the law imposed, by sentencing the youth to the fearful, ignominious death of a capital offender.*

At the close of this term of the court Judge Wilson resigned, probably in the year 1817 or 1818.

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* Since the above was prepared I find there are one or two inaccuracies in the statement, but not affecting the main object for which the matter was alluded to, viz., as showing the amount of pain and mental distress which the entire transaction had caused the judge. The accused was arraigned before him Oct. 20th, 1817, and the case so far heard as to result in his commitment for trial. It was then adjourned from time to time. On the 19th of Jan., 1818, the case is again referred to, but the associate judges are only mentioned as present. The note on the record is, "No Presiding Judge." In all probability Judge Wilson had at this time resigned, and his succĕssor, Judge Ross, had not yet received his appointment. April 13th, 1818, Judge Ross is mentioned as presiding. April 14th, the accused received his sentence. The above memoranda are taken from "the docket," as furnished by the Hon. E. Darlington, a venerable and highly distinguished member of the bar of Delaware County. It is understood that Judge Wilson had once pronounced the sentence of death, but then determined he would not do so a second time.

He devoted himself thenceforth to his preparation for the Christian ministry, to which he was admitted by Bishop White, (under whom he had prosecuted his studies,) as a Deacon in Christ Church, Philadelphia, on the 12th of March, 1819; and as a Priest, about a year subsequently.

From the long known, deeply religious character of Dr. Wilson, and the zeal he had evinced as a layman in the affairs of the Church, I have never been disposed to regard the painful incident above referred to, as the great or procuring cause of the change of sphere which so soon thereafter resulted. We know not how long the hand of God had been drawing him onward to His own more immediate work, nor yet how long the subject of those heavenly influences had heard and recognized the whispering accents of a divine Spirit, pointing to a higher, nobler path, and counselling to his docile heart, "this is the way, walk thou in it."

I have ever been disposed to believe, yet

without any definite authority for saying so, that the question of the sacred ministry was no new one with him,—that his thoughts, aye, and his affections also, had long been turned in that direction, and that the only effect of this painful trial was, to bring him at once to the settled decision of what had long been an open question.

But that the trial referred to had made an impression upon his mind which no lapse of time or change of circumstances could possibly weaken, much less efface, became painfully evident to his friends from a very trying scene. During the sad and fatal illness of Dr. Wilson, which lasted, with many alternations and varieties of intensity, for nearly three years,* his mind, at times, was very seriously affected, he having ceased to have any control over it. Upon the occasion alluded to, his mind evidently reverted strongly to the days of his legal practice, at

* His malady was softening of the brain.

one moment making some casual suggestion to the counsel, at another formally addressing a jury. It was the solemn, quiet hour of night. Two only were present at his bedside, the one, his devoted, sorrowing niece; the other, the writer of this memorial.

As we narrowly watched every changing expression of his countenance, and listened, in breathless silence, to catch whatever might escape his lips, he turned his straining eyes heavenward, and the most indescribable expression of intense, fearful agony settled darkly upon his features. Then clasping his forehead violently with both hands, he exclaimed, in tones of the deepest bitterness, "He was launched into eternity unprepared; but, oh, God! impute it not to me!"

The whole scene has made an indelible impression upon the two who witnessed it, and who were at no loss in realizing that he had gone back, in imagination, to what had been, in all probability, the closing scene in his judicial career. The emotions which then

agitated his soul as he looked down upon the poor, doomed culprit, again wrung his heart with an agony, only embittered by the fearful reflection that he had been hurried into the presence of his God "before his sins had been done away by His mercy, or his pardon sealed in heaven."

What a picture of the loveliness of a tender, sympathetic heart, rendered softer and still lovelier by the gentle dews of heavenly grace!

Perfectly unmanned by a scene so harrowing to us, and knowing not which way to turn, I can only remember having clasped his trembling hands, entreating him to forget what had transpired so long ago,—"All this, doctor," said I, "occurred years ago, while you were a judge, but remember, now you are a clergyman."

Turning upon me with the quickness of thought, and apparently irritated by the utter absurdity of my suggestion, he exclaimed, "What of all that? Do you sup-

pose that I am not to answer for what I did as a judge?"

Unhinged as was that mighty intellect, how quickly could it perceive the great bearings of duty and accountability! Such considerations had been too long the guiding stars of a life, now well advanced, to be utterly eclipsed, even by a disordered, shattered brain.

Were it not that this incident throws a flood of light upon traits of character, the bare existence of which some might be disposed to question, I should feel that an apology was due for so far lifting the veil from that mysterious sickness, the harbinger of an end so unlike what any would have anticipated; so very different from what any friend would have chosen for him, had it pertained to us to order the time or manner of his departure hence. And how, after meditating upon such a scene, must the prayer of Laud, Archbishop and Martyr, come back to us with thrilling interest, as something which may concern us,

we know not how soon or how deeply! "Oh! let me not be snatched away unprepared, nor surprised in any act of sin, nor called upon when my lamp is untrimmed. Let my death (if it be Thy blessed will) be neither violent nor untimely, but after the ordinary visitation of men. *Preserve my reason and religion, my faith and hope, my sense and speech, perfect and useful to the last of my days,* and grant that I may die the death of the righteous, and that my future state may be like his." Yes, we would all implore at the hands of God a space to review our condition and our hopes, an interval in life's fevered dream, for calm, Christian meditation. A brief season, at least, for putting our houses in order, that when the summons shall come, we may not be found sleeping, or unprepared to obey its mandates. It is the wish, nay, the hope also, of the worldling, the trifling, and the sinner, who madly put off all thought of the soul, hoping that in death, when not forever too late, he may be indulged a brief

interval in which to cry for mercy. It is a feeling, an instinctive prompting of our natures which cannot find a more appropriate vehicle for its expression than is afforded us in the simple language of the Psalmist, to which we have so often listened, in our sublime and unequalled office for the burial of the dead,—"O, spare me a little that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen!"

The scene to which I have alluded has its uses, as just hinted, and they are very important uses in estimating aright the character of Dr. Wilson. A mere casual interview, or a certain degree of intimacy even, might beget the impression (no doubt this has been the case in some instances) that he was a man cold in his feelings, though always courteous to, and respectful of, those with whom he came in contact. But an impression further removed from the truth could not easily be imagined. He had his peculiarities, indeed; and a very marked one was this,—that

he very seldom, if indeed ever, was heard to name, or even allude to, any person whom he had deeply loved in life, after his or her removal hence. The hand of death seemed to have sealed his lips with theirs.

In proof of this take the following tender incident, as related by his niece. His favorite sister, named Emily, was removed hence very suddenly, and on one occasion, previous to her burial, after being missed by his family, he was found lying upon the bed beside the body of that sister; and yet he was never heard to allude to her afterward save once, and then while his mind was in a wandering, unsettled state. And was this a proof of thoughtlessness of, an indication of indifference to, the departed? Was it a cold, deliberate, and systematic attempt to banish their very images from the tablet of memory? Thus, some will be found to argue, but how unreasonably, how unjustly! The very sacredness of the tie, now made more deeply sacred, which still bound them together, was the sole

cause of that delicate, impressive, eloquent silence. The very expression of his countenance, when such were alluded to, betrayed something of what was going on in the hidden depths of his own soul; counselling to others a sacred reserve, if only out of regard to feelings so tender, so poignant. It was like venturing unbidden upon ground which he had fenced around as holy, within which, who could rudely force his way? And what is true of this class of feelings with him, may be predicated of every other class.

They were not mere surface feelings, intended for parade, for public exhibition; but they were deep, sacred, and abiding principles of his nature, schooled, disciplined, and restrained by reason, and by that delicate sense of propriety which inclines all rightly constituted natures to have and retain within them one holy place into which the rude gaze of a heartless world cannot penetrate,—a spot "with which the stranger intermeddleth not."

His was not an extatic nature, upon which, for the moment, the merest trifle will produce an effect or bring on a flood of emotions, which in more truly and nicely balanced natures it would require some powerful cause to develop. In every emergency, under every announcement, whether joyous or the reverse, he maintained his perfect self-possession, and was thus the better prepared to act as the exigency of the case might seem to demand. It was not heartlessness; far, very far from it. It was self-control, self-command, qualities which too many read amiss, as only synonymous with selfishness, and the utter absence of every hearty, genial impulse. Would that all who have ever settled down upon any such erroneous conclusion could have witnessed the tithe even of what others have: they would then have found their cherished theories of character all at fault, and that their fancied penetration had fallen short in detecting precious gems which they dreamed not could possibly exist, only because hidden

in a mine which it was not given them to explore. Let such, if any there are, study the bedside scene just described, and there learn a lesson from the book of human character, truer far than all the suggestions of any hasty, immature judgment.

We left the personal history of Dr. Wilson at the date of his ordination to the ranks of the sacred ministry. He had then attained his 40th year.

On the 3d of May, 1820, Bishop White announced, in his address to the Annual Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, the decease of the Rev. Thos. P. May, Rector of St. John's Church, Norristown, and of St. Thomas's Church, Whitemarsh. After speaking in terms of deserved encomium of his deceased Presbyter, he adds, as an alleviation to the loss which these parishes had sustained, "that there was one residing within their bounds, the Rev. Bird Wilson, recently ordained, but long known among them for his able and faithful discharge of the duties of

a highly responsible office in the Judiciary department, and who, without delay, was chosen, and settled as their Pastor."

This was the first and only Rectorship held by Dr. Wilson throughout his entire clerical life;—a Rectorship, moreover, which lasted but about two years.

As nothing appears of very especial interest connected with this brief Pastorate, we may naturally infer that his clerical life there was not unlike that of the incumbents of similar semi-rural Parishes. But in connection with Norristown, one circumstance deserves mention. This had been his Judicial residence, and it was there that he was chiefly instrumental in organizing a Parish, and in the erection of a church edifice, still standing. He had been a warden of the same Parish for several years, as well as a delegate from it in the annual conventions of the Diocese. For his activity, generous support of the church, and general usefulness as a layman, none had a higher estimate of him than the late Rev.

J. C. Clay, D.D., whom God has taken to himself, full of years, and after a life of devoted usefulness.

From what has been said of Dr. Wilson as a lawyer, no one can be at a loss for his true position as a preacher of the Gospel in the church of God. Besides, many who have sat at his feet as pupils, have also been privileged at times to listen to his enforcement of the divine word.

He was not what is known as a popular preacher. He had none of the so-called graces of oratory. His voice, never strong, made it often necessary that the fixed and undivided attention of his hearers should be given. His manner was quiet, dignified, and impressive. It was just such a manner as accorded with his style of writing; just such a manner as might be expected of one who felt deeply the responsibility of his position, and the nature of the solemn charge, with the delivery of which he had been entrusted by God. I can now readily recall one of his sermons. It was

on the text, "Now we are ambassadors for God; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." The manner of delivery was pre-eminently what I have endeavored to describe. It seemed as though the very nature of the subject had impressed him the more strongly with a deep sense of the dignity of the office, as acting for God; and of its tremendous responsibility, because devoted to the solemn work of reconciling sinners unto God.

He felt the subject deeply, as was evident from the difficulty with which he seemed to repress his emotions; and the quiet earnestness in which his feeling showed itself, could not fail to make each one present realize his own deep and intimate concern in the weighty message.

To those who looked for the outward trappings of mere rhetorical display, he could not prove to be otherwise than dull and unattractive. But, to the cultivated, thoughtful,

and serious, how different the aspect! Purity of character unassailed, and unquestioned even; a depth of learning, which, while it was never obtruded for the mere sake of the reputation of learning, yet gave solidity, finish, and a grace to whatever fell from his pen;—these added to a manner which bespoke the deep sincerity of every utterance, to the end that his hearers, alike convinced, should apply to their own hearts and lives the heavenly lessons inculcated;—these are features of a herald of divine truth, never recognized but with one result. The thoughtful went away with the conviction that they had been supplied with new and rich material for thought in future; and all, intent upon eternal life, that they had been furnished with new and more powerful incentives to run more diligently hereafter, "the race set before them."

Were I driven, in the description of his style of writing, to the use of a single expression, none would more naturally suggest itself than this,—that it was perfectly *exhaustive.*

The subject was presented in all its fulness, and, so far as it went, leaving nothing to be added. This was the result, in part, of the very character of his mind; but in a good degree attributable also to the very peculiar effect of a long study of the Law, and the constant discussion and application of its principles as a Judge; the tendency of which is, to give a breadth and depth of thought, and that quick and peculiar nicety of discrimination in the application of principles which is fostered by no other branch of study to the same extent. His was the style of the Sherlocks, of Waterland, Hooker, Beveridge, Horne, Bull, Horsley, Pearson, Secker, Faber, Venn, and others,—all of them distinguished lights of the Church;—all the favorite authors of his study: a class of divines from whom we derive the very marrow of our Theology, expressed in language which has made them the undisputed standards, not only of purity of doctrine, but of finished composition also. Such is the class with whom the name of Dr.

Wilson will ever be associated by the Christian student—the witness of his standing as a divine in point of tone of doctrine, as well as of his completeness in scholarship. It is a niche in the temple of God, which the most aspiring might be proud to fill.

Though restricted in his ministerial labors to the comparatively limited circle of two small, but highly respectable Parishes, the reputation he had already acquired could not thus be straightened. He was not only known, but favorably known far beyond any such narrow circle.

The General Theological Seminary, then in its infancy, had been established at New Haven, Connecticut; and at a meeting of the Trustees, held on the 24th of July, 1821, Dr. Wilson was appointed to the chair of Systematic Divinity. This he accepted. In the following autumn a Special General Convention was held. The Seminary at New Haven, and a Diocesan school in New York, were blended together; the new Institution to be

located in New York. At the first meeting of the Trustees, held Dec. 19th, 1821, Dr. Wilson was reappointed to the same chair, and entered upon his duties the spring following;—duties, which, with an unfaltering devotion and eminent success, he continued to discharge for twenty-nine years. Thus consecrating to God, in this department of His great work, the most valuable portion of his life, and with results which can only be accurately measured when the secrets of the eternal world shall have been revealed to us.

As a Professor, and in his lecture-room, he displayed to their best advantage every feature of a mind, the character of which I have sought to develop. The text-book—be it Pearson, or Magee, or Scott, or Horsley—for the time being was his manual; and his familiarity with the author was as complete and thorough, as though the volume which he held in his hand was the only book which had ever seen the light. This is readily accounted for, when it is known that hours

were spent daily before each recitation, in preparation for the particular subject of the day. It was his uniform custom to pace diagonally across his study while thus engaged, until a footpath upon the carpet was worn as distinctly as any frequented route across a common.

In one sense he was very particular to confine himself to the especial author in hand, which is very well illustrated by a characteristic anecdote. It is obvious to any one, that in the broad field of doctrinal Theology there are innumerable points upon which no ordinary Christian, even, can be presumed to be in utter ignorance. The appointed lessons in church, the prayers, the instructions of the pulpit, have all made these points familiar. And, as thus taught, even a Sunday-school child could state its knowledge in a very clear, sensible, and correct manner. Now the anecdote is this. That a certain student, relying upon such sources of information, and trusting withal to a fair share of readiness of

language, had shown a disposition to omit the attentive study of the particular author required, and to depend upon his own general knowledge and resources. Doubtless, Dr. Wilson had noticed this as rapidly growing up into an unpardonable habit of neglect of study. On one occasion, the gentleman referred to was enlarging upon the point upon which his knowledge was required, in his usual easy manner, when suddenly the voice of the Professor arrested his farther progress. The Doctor very quietly, but significantly remarked, "What you have given us, sir, is all very correct, and sensible; but, Mr. ———, what does Bishop Pearson say?" This was applying a searching test indeed; and the result proved, what none had doubted from the onset, that the gentleman's intelligent acquaintance with the author in question was yet to be made. The anecdote is well worthy of preservation, as going to show the precise amount of preparation required by Dr. Wilson, and especially, when nothing more was

needed than a just and reasonable amount of conscientious application to study. I have said that he mainly confined himself to the author in hand;—by which I mean, that he made it the basis, the groundwork of the recitation of the hour. But as occasion offered, or the subject required it, his references to other authors were both numerous and invaluable. His comments, or criticisms, though brief, clear, and sententious, were always to the point; and *he* has enriched his text-books to a good purpose indeed, who has entered upon their margins what fell from the lips of Dr. Wilson during the recitations of his department. These brief notes are important guide-posts to the student in his after-life, the value of which he has fully realized and tested, while engaged in filling up the great outlines of his Seminary course.

Upon all controverted points, the student was supplied with references to the most authentic documents, or distinguished advocates of the conflicting doctrine or opinion, in which

respect he closely followed the example of Bishop White, whom he loved as a man, revered as a divine, and valued as a scholar; with whom he fully sympathized on all the great questions of theology.

Here too it was, in the recitations of the class, that the student was so often astonished by that peculiar nicety of discrimination which has already been referred to as a characteristic feature of his sermons and other written productions, thus bringing out shades of meaning, or striking distinctions, where before none had been dreamed of even, and yet, withal, so obvious, so conclusive, when once actually pointed out, that the student would often become dissatisfied, self-displeased at his own supposed dulness and stupidity; just as one witnessing the wonderful machinery of some new and curious invention after having its separate parts explained and their adaptations noted, wonders how he could have failed to be himself the fortunate inventor.

But one subject, as every Alumnus of the Seminary will unite with me in affirming, but one single subject of the entire course ever called out from Dr. Wilson what might be called an animated, spirited discussion on his part. That subject was the very mooted point of the invalidity of lay baptism. It was for years the custom in the Seminary every Saturday evening for the students to assemble in the Chapel for prayers, the service being conducted by one of the Professors. An essay was then read by a member of the Senior or Middle Class on alternate evenings. Those of the Senior Class were upon some practical duty, while those of the Middle Class were upon some disputed doctrine, question of interpretation, or other point involving critical investigation. At the conclusion of the essay, the students were called upon individually for remarks, critical or practical, according to the subject-matter of the essay. The whole was closed by such suggestions as occurred to the Professor in attendance. During

the middle year of the class with which the writer was connected, an elaborate essay was read, devoted to the task of proving the utter invalidity of lay baptism. The critical observations of the students having been brought to a conclusion, Dr. Wilson prefaced his own comments with the remark, "that as the whole subject would come up regularly in its course in the studies of his department, it would be unnecessary for him to detain us longer at that advanced hour of the evening; he would, however, make an observation or two." And having ventured thus far, he actually consumed some thirty or forty minutes in one of the most fluent, logical, and, in point of manner, excited discussions ever heard from him. This particular subject was the source of a good deal of innocent and always respectful pleasantry with every succeeding class, the impression having become a general one that the unusual warmth of feeling manifested by Dr. Wilson was attributable to the fact that he had himself received lay baptism, and

therefore felt a deep, personal interest in its thorough vindication. A supposition not entirely destitute of weight, inasmuch as he was, in all probability, baptized by one of the rigid Scotch school, then presiding over a congregation in Philadelphia.

An Alumnus of the Seminary, and one of her most valued sons,* having received an intimation that a beginning had been made in the collection of materials for this memorial, congratulates the author upon his undertaking, and thus refers to his late honored Preceptor, viz., "as one of the sweetest and best of characters, and one of the choicest scholars of the American church. May God," he continues, "give you the pen of a ready writer, and a memory to recall all that was lovely of that pure and bright light that was so long a guide to others; and that holy prophet, who was so long a teacher 'in the school of the prophets.'" And he winds up

* The Rev. S. M. Haskins, Rector of St. Mark's Church, Williamsburg.

with a question containing a most valuable suggestion. "Have you," says he, "among his papers, a lecture on *Romans?* He read it to our class, and its teaching was the clearest and best that I ever heard."

The manuscript alluded to is now before me, and I feel that a greater boon could not be extended to his old pupils, to all students of Divinity at the present day, nor to the members of the Church generally, than by reproducing the entire essay in the form of an Appendix.

Previous to the year 1827, the exercises of the Seminary were held in such suitable places in the City of New York as could be procured. The corner-stone of the eastern building of the two now occupied for that purpose was laid in 1825, a very large and valuable plot of ground having been deeded for the purpose by Clement C. Moore, LL.D., the distinguished Professor, subsequently, of the Hebrew tongue, in the institution which he had so nobly aided.

The residence, forming the western end of the building alluded to, became, in Oct. 1827, the permanent residence of Dr. Wilson.

The neighborhood was then not unlike the distant outskirts of every large city,—almost deserted, save by an occasional old country mansion resisting the tide of change, together with the humble, unpretending abodes of the laboring poor. Some of the principal Avenues, and here and there a street across the island, had been graded, or partially so, leaving barren-looking cedars and other growths upon the rough, wayside hillocks,* and altogether as unlike the region of to-day as though they had been found upon different continents. At the period referred to it was a quiet, rural scene, with the picturesque banks of Hoboken and the Elysian Fields in full view. The waters of the noble Hudson sweeping by, almost up to the western boundary of the plot so munificently deeded by Dr. Moore.

* The writer describes the region as he remembers it when a boy, while on a visit to Dr. Wilson.

A scene occasionally enlivened by the passage of a steamboat, or the whitened sails of the various river craft as they sped upon their way; the main dependence for the transmission of merchandise and other products into, and in return from, the interior counties of the State. It was a quiet, studious retreat, away from the din and bustle of crowded thoroughfares, where it would seem the devotee of learning had every appliance to aid him in his work, with naught to distract the mind, or call off the thoughts, from solemn, weighty studies. What changes time, the fever of speculation, and the pressing necessities of a crowded population, have since effected, are too well known, and, for the sake of the Seminary, have been too long lamented, to require a single word of comment here.

Almost as a matter of necessity, provision had to be made near at hand for the religious duties of the students, especially on Sundays. This was at length effected by converting the long room, appropriated as a Library, into a

temporary Chapel. The matter was taken in hand at once by Drs. Wilson and Turner, who continued to officiate alternately for a series of years. There the Professors, with their families and dependents, and the students, (then limited in point of numbers,) formed, as it were, the church in one house, as one family, for the worship of Almighty God.

But a work thus begun could not well end there. Devoted women, aided by the active co-operation of the students, and encouraged, at least, by the approving sanction of the Faculty, began to search out the neglected poor of a hitherto moral waste, gathering them in also, for instruction in religious truth and the practice of Christian duties. This effort was signally blessed. The worship of the few became the happy privilege of the many, while some of those then gathered there to be taught the simplest rudiments of the Christian faith, have since been occupied with marked success in preaching to others the comforting truths of the Gospel.

Thus literally "the little one became a thousand," gradually adding numbers to numbers, until, no longer able to provide within the Seminary walls for all who would share the Gospel feast, the Chapel of St. Peter's was erected; a small building, but at the time of its erection, considered a vast attempt for that poor and unsettled neighborhood. This in turn gave way to the present large Parish church of the same name, now so prosperous and efficient under the energetic and faithful Rectorship of the Rev. Dr. Beach.

One of the number here referred to* preceded the subject of this memoir, by some two years, in her journey to an honored grave. She had presided for years over the family arrangements of his household, devoting herself unreservedly, and especially in periods of sickness, to every student who might stand in need of her valuable, affectionate, and tender services. Ever among the most active in the service of the poor,

* Miss Martin.

and untiring in the labors of the Sunday-school, her sterling worth has long since been appreciated, and upon the very walls she was so instrumental in aiding to rear, now stands an appropriate mural tablet, recording her virtues and attesting the gratitude of Christian hearts.

In the year 1826 Dr. Wilson was a candidate for the office of Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

It would appear, from the address delivered by Bishop White at the close of the Special Convention of Oct. 1826, that for a year or more previously there had been "consultations, and even some measures adopted toward the election of an Assistant Bishop," but without asking what might be the views or wishes of Bishop White in the premises.

After the convention held at Reading, in May, 1825, the Bishop was approached by certain prominent members of the Clergy, who expressed their deep and thorough dissatisfaction at the course which had been

pursued, especially as his individual feelings on the subject seemed to have been entirely ignored.

In reference to this aspect of the case, the Bishop, with his characteristic Christian meekness, yet manly dignity, replies, "I have nothing to answer." But in view of his age,* and his extended Parochial duties, and the increasing wants of the Diocese, "he ought to entertain no objection to the design,"—*i.e.* the election of an Assistant.

A Special Convention was summoned for the express purpose "of electing an Assistant Bishop, and if determined on, to carry the same into effect."

It was convened on the 25th of October, the Sessions being held in St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia.

There were difficulties, and serious ones too, in determining in some cases whether particular parties were canonically resident in

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* He was in his 80th year.

the Diocese, and therefore entitled to a vote. On the one hand efforts were made to force in persons whose canonical qualifications were, at the least, doubtful; and, on the other, similar efforts were made to exclude persons of whose right there could be no serious question.*

The seat even of Dr. Wilson was disputed, because a Professor in the General Theological Seminary, but the Committee on credentials very properly reported, that "while his duties there are of a public and official character, he has in no way changed his residence or ceased to be a resident of Pennsylvania."

These questions having been satisfactorily disposed of, the Convention proceeded to a ballot of the Clerical members.

The candidates were the Rev. Bird Wilson, D.D., and the Rev. William Meade, of Virginia, the late Bishop of that Diocese.

Dr. Wilson cast a blank vote. The tellers

* These difficulties as to the competency of members were confined almost exclusively to the *opponents* of Dr. Wilson

announced that the Rev. Wm. Meade had received 27 votes, and the Rev. Dr. Wilson 26.

The Rt. Rev. President was about to announce the nomination of the Rev. Wm. Meade to the laity, when further action was suspended by the suggestion "that *a majority* of clerical members present had not voted for any candidate."*

A supplemental report was made by the tellers, from which it appeared that "there were 54 clerical members present, and that one of them had declined voting," which vote being counted rendered it *a tie*. Upon which, Bishop White announced "that there was no constitutional vote for any candidate." And by a subsequent resolution the whole subject was postponed until the next stated meeting of the Convention.

That Convention was held at Harrisburg, May 8th, 1827. Dr. Wilson was again urged to allow his name to be used as a candidate,

* The suggestion probably came from the Hon. Joseph R. Ingersoll.

but he peremptorily declined. It was at this Convention that the late Henry U. Onderdonk, D.D., late Bishop, was duly elected.*

Within but a few years of his decease, Bishop White, in alluding to this period, was often heard to remark, that it gave him, at the time, more distress and anxiety than all the delays and diffiulties connected with obtaining the Episcopate from England, and the trials connected with the early establishment of the Church in this country as an independent branch.

In proof of the deep solicitude caused him by the undue prevalence of party spirit, take the following from his address to the Stated Convention of 1827:—

"Before the rising of the body, (referring to the late Special Convention,) I was asked publicly whether I would again recommend

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* The above detail is made from the journals of Convention, and by information kindly furnished by the Rev. John Rodney and the Hon. Horace Binney. See also Dr. Wilson's Memoir of Bishop White, pp. 216–228.

the measure (*i.e.* the election of an Assistant Bishop) to the Convention which would be assembled in May. My answer, made publicly also, was that I would not; although I should naturally be led to mention the subject as that for which the Special Convention had been called to no purpose.

"My reason for the limitation arose from the excitement of feelings which I had perceived to be produced; and out of occurrences *which my mind could not reconcile to the integrity of ecclesiastical proceedings; such as I had never before witnessed in our Church, and concerning which I was resolved, that if there should be a continuance of them, no act of mine should contribute to it.*"*

The conclusion of this address has a solemn, touching interest, and in quoting it I have no desire to rekindle fires which it is to be hoped have been smothered if not extinguished, but simply to give completeness to the records of a

* See Journal of Pennsylvania Convention for 1827, p. 10.

period which should be marked, if for no other reason, as a solemn warning to us in the future.

The address concludes thus:—

"Brethren:—During the long course of my presiding in the councils of this Diocese, I have witnessed the Church within it brought from a state bordering on annihilation, and extended as we perceive it to be at present.

"Within all that time, until lately, there has been felt generally the influence of the spirit of that peace which our Saviour left as a legacy to His disciples in His interview with them immediately before His passion. This state of amity has always been considered as one of the best of the blessings which a gracious Providence has bestowed on me.

"From present appearances I perceive reason to fear that trials, hitherto unknown, are reserved for the small remainder of my days.

"I have painfully witnessed the progress of ecclesiastical transactions in contrariety to the clearest dictates of religious and moral obligation; not without the accompaniment

of indignities personally wounding to my feelings, such as I think unmerited, and certainly such as I have been a stranger to in my earlier years.

"The subject is mentioned with a view of pledging my assurance to those who seek the integrity of our Zion, that during my continuance in life, and looking to Divine aid for support, I will bear my testimony in favor of the truths of our holy religion, as exhibited by the institutions of our Church, and against all endeavors directed to their destruction, or to their deterioration.

"While in respect to what concerns me personally, I do not affect insensibility to the circumstance, it will be my prayer, that, through the grace of God, I may be preserved from every grade of hostility to any individual in return, and from its being felt in the intercourse and the duties attached to my official character."*

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* See Journal for 1827, p. 22.

One other circumstance connected with this period deserves notice. It is unquestionably true that Bishop White's choice in the contemplated election would have been Dr. Wilson. One whom he had known and watched from childhood, whom he had ever loved, and who had occupied the position of a pupil in Theology. But, he invariably pursued the same dignified, high-minded course. He would nominate no one as his associate in the administration of the Diocese. He would not lend himself to the work of electioneering for his favorite.

He told his Convention,* that "whatever might be construed as an endeavor to give direction to your proceedings has been avoided. It is my intention," he adds, "to persevere in this line of conduct, especially so far as the contrary might have a bearing upon the character or qualifications of any individual until the subject shall be brought before the House of Bishops."

* See Journal for 1826, pp. 20, 21.

I have often heard the following statement from one who knew Bishop White intimately, and was, at this period, an active member of the Convention.* It was to this effect: that the Bishop was approached by some prominent gentlemen, who were anxious to hear from his own lips who would be the most acceptable to him. His reply, in few, but pregnant words, was most significant. "Gentlemen, I have such confidence in the Convention of my Diocese that I shall most cheerfully accept any person whom they may see fit to assign me."

In 1829 Dr. Wilson was elected Secretary of the House of Bishops, in which capacity he continued to serve the Church until 1841, when he declined re-election.

In the month of July, on Sunday the 17th, 1836, after a brief illness, the venerable Bishop White "was gathered unto his fathers." When the question arose in his

* The Rev. Wm. Cooper Mead, D.D., now of the Diocese of Connecticut.

family as to whom should be entrusted his literary remains, and the pleasing duty of commemorating his singular virtues, every eye was turned upon Dr. Wilson, whose "faithful assistant, firm friend, and admiring disciple he had ever been." In the wisdom of this selection the family of the Bishop were confirmed by the unanimous action of the Clergy of Philadelphia, together with other distinguished gentlemen, who had come from the adjacent, and even distant Dioceses of our country, to attend the funeral of that lamented Prelate.

That work of love was undertaken as desired, and was published in 1839. "A work," says one, "which is not likely to be superseded." It was pre-eminently the most fitting choice, "for," to quote again, "he bore, himself, a striking resemblance to him whom he thus worthily commemorated. There was the same modesty and gentleness of soul, the same kindly urbanity so characteristic of gentlemen of the old school, the same clear-

ness, as well as moderation of views, the same indestructible firmness with which *principles* were held, and the same delicate conscientiousness in regard to the rights and opinions and feelings of others, which is the channel by which a reverent esteem flows easily into love."*

The Memoir of Bishop White, by Dr. Wilson, is virtually the history of the early establishment of the Church in this land as an independent branch of the one Church Catholic. This is owing to the intimate connection of its subject with all the important movements of that period.

As an exposition of the distinctive theological position of the Bishop, it is as clear as it is impartial and entirely reliable. A work demanding patient thought and long-continued research; one, we may add, which has done full justice to both subject and author.

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* See an obituary notice of Dr. Wilson, in the editorial columns of "The Church Journal."

From the date to which the publication of this Memoir has brought us onward to 1844, there appears to have been nothing of any moment to vary the even, quiet tenor of Dr. Wilson's ordinary, but ever studious, life. During the sessions of the Seminary, which occupied the greater portion of every year, he had, of course, his usual routine of labor connected with his department, a routine which, with his conscientious views and singular devotion to the best interests of the students, was far from being a sinecure; notwithstanding that, year after year he was called to traverse the same path with every step of which he must long since have grown perfectly familiar. He was a student to the last, and more than this, he kept pace with the Theological literature of his day, a thing by no means common with professional men at his advanced period of life.

The full and extended notes which he has left behind him are witnesses. Edwards, Wilberforce on the Incarnation, Moehler,

Milner's End of Controversy, the Oxford Tracts, the British Critic and other publications of the day, all attest the *critical* eye with which he read. The author in hand was not treated with the supercilious indifference of some modern, flippant reviewer, who places the bare title of a book at the head of his article as a motto to some disquisition of his own, but the author's every position was carefully noted for approbation or rejection, as he taught, or failed to teach, the truth in its integrity. And thus, in the pleasant intercourse of books, or with friends, who were ever most welcome guests at his hospitable board, and in his systematic round of exercise, his days were passed in tranquil, quiet enjoyment. He seemed to breathe the very atmosphere of sweet serenity, while, at the same time, he took a lively interest in whatever of concernment was passing in the world around him, or within the more retired circles of private friendship. Perhaps he scarce ever appeared to greater

advantage, or to enjoy himself more thoroughly, than when seated in his study with some who had graduated under his own eye, listening to whatever most concerned them in the management of their respective cures, and, doubtless, comparing, in his own mind, the character and results of their ministrations with his own previously formed opinions of them, while candidates only for the sacred work in which they were now actively engaged. Be the topic what it might, whether the details, the pleasures, the embarrassments of Parochial labor, or the systematic course of study and reading which are so indispensable to the faithful, thoroughly furnished Pastor; each and all had its peculiar interest in his eyes, an interest which betrayed itself in words, and a manner which could not be misunderstood. It was in just such that he sought the fruits,—the grateful returns of his own devoted labors.

To this class must be added the resident students, who were still preparing to gird on

the armor, in which they were to be called to fight the battles of the Lord, and of His Church. These also were ever most welcome visitants. Hour after hour has been passed by them in refreshing their minds at this pure, bright fountain of truth and learning,—and with the image of that holy man must ever be associated, until memory shall fail, the blessed privilege they enjoyed of thus holding intimate communion with one who could resolve their doubts, clear up their difficulties, and cheer them onward in the toilsome, and often rugged path of sacred learning. In this way, the very richest stores of knowledge were laid up for future use;—treasures of wisdom, which, in all probability, might never have been gleaned from any other source. The mere fact that there was one single person to whom a zeal for the truth had been imparted, seemed to render that person an object of very peculiar interest,—quickening the ardor of his well furnished Professor so to convey the coveted knowledge,

as would not only satisfy the wants of his hearer; but it was also imparted with a winning kindliness of manner, such as might tempt him back again on the same useful errand.

There was everything to attract; nought to repel. No dogmatism,—no impatience,—no supercilious looking down upon what some might regard and treat as a degrading confession of ignorance upon the part of the applicant.

Heart, mind, all that he had, were sacredly devoted to the work of aiding others in their efforts to reach the elevated stand-point which he so meekly occupied. And the appreciation of this signal interest was shown in the fact, that his leisure hours were but seldom passed alone.

The exact position occupied by Dr. Wilson as a Theologian, may be thus described. He stood the acknowledged representative of the standard divines of the Church of England.

Upon the subject of an Apostolical Minis-

try, his views were very much the same as those of Bishop White,—as is evident from the most cursory examination of his Memoir of that distinguished Prelate,—views which might well be classed under Archbishop Leighton's heading of "Moderate Episcopacy."

Upon the Sacraments of the Church, he held the high ground so long occupied by the Church in her acknowledged Standards, as derived from Scripture, and the unbroken current of Primitive teaching, witnessing the sense in all ages, as to what those Scriptures teach.

The same may be said of the doctrines of grace, so far more especially as those doctrines conflict with a certain system, the coinage of the fertile, but speculative brain of St. Augustine;—a system now known, by common consent, as Calvinism,—but for which John Calvin has done no more than simply to arrange and systematize into a definite creed, the teachings of his favorite master.

Dr. Wilson held—he taught no dogmas in

common with that system. This was patent to all who ever attended the recitations of his class-room; and was, moreover, avowed under his own hand, in a short but pithy answer to one of the 40 questions submitted by the Bishops of the Church, in their capacity as visitors of the Seminary.* In corroboration of this statement, let the reader take the following passages from his manuscript notes and criticisms upon "Witsius on the Covenant,"—extracts which might be multiplied, and all of the one character, to any extent. He says:—

"The clear, plain, and correct doctrine seems to be that mankind, after the fall, were still under obligation to obey the moral law, as originally given,—that they incur its penalty as sinners,—that *an universal remedy*† has been provided for them by the covenant of grace, (the Gospel,) according to which,

* His exact language is this: "As to the five points of Calvinism, no one of them is *taught* by me, as I do not hold them; but the views of both parties are duly examined."

† The words are italicized as in the manuscript.

they are, through *faith on their part, pardoned* and *accepted into favor,* and *consequently rewarded by God, for the sake, and on account of the merits of the Redeemer,* and not in consequence of the *imputation or transfer of His righteousness to them as their own.* Their *faith* is declared by the New Testament, and by the Old, *to be imputed to them for righteousness,* (or justification.") Again:—

"*The imputation of Christ's righteousness* to Christians for justification, is as untenable a proposition as the *imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity for condemnation to eternal punishment.* The true representation of the Gospel is, that *for Christ's sake, and on account of His merits and sufferings,* the real Christian is *pardoned* and *accepted,* on complying with the terms of *evangelical faith and obedience, which are imputed to him for righteousness.*"

Once more:—"I am more fully convinced of the entire weakness of the support alleged to be given by the Scriptures to the Calvinistic doctrine,—(speaking of election.) Nothing,

it appears to me, could give even *plausibility* to their reasoning, except a license taken too commonly by controversialists, of interpreting and applying passages, (even *verses*, and *parts of verses*,) *as if they were isolated texts*, without due regard to the subject treated of, the *course of reasoning*, and *general design of the writer;* which is so necessary, that without it the true meaning of no author can be satisfactorily determined. Hence passages relating to entirely different subjects are forcibly wrested, to be applied to *this*. It is *more easy* to follow this course, but very unfavorable to *truth*."

In another place he speaks of the effect of the Calvinistic system:—"It has a *natural* tendency to produce spiritual pride, and a neglect of exertion."

Now, while all were made very clearly to understand Dr. Wilson's position on every disputed doctrine, yet no one was ever encouraged to adopt views, the result of his own patient thought and investigation, except so

far as the arguments and authorities adduced by him were calculated to bring conviction to the mind of the student.

As the whole subject of the Ministry belonged to another chair, Dr. Wilson's own opinions upon that important point were gleaned chiefly from private interviews,—at least, prior to his publication of the Memoir of Bishop White.

The course in his department, restricted in a great degree for the want of adequate time, (and it was often the subject of his deep regret,) that course was thorough, clear, definite, and satisfactory. It involved an amount of mental training and discipline which, of itself, and aside from the large accessions to one's stores of indispensable learning, was such as has led many a graduate to look back in after-years upon the hours thus spent with infinite satisfaction, as the solid groundwork of their Ecclesiastical education. It was a department which at almost every step involved the refreshing of one's knowledge of

Ecclesiastical history; and especially in reference to the points on which the Church comes in collision with Rome on the one hand, and with Socinianism in all its gradations on the other. And when we reflect upon the vast importance of every branch of Theological learning to the intellectual furniture of the Ministry, it would be difficult, and might seem invidious, to draw any comparison. This I shall not attempt,—while at the same time, the indispensable necessity of a correct understanding of Systematic divinity, to give order, harmony, symmetry, and a due proportion to the instructions of the Ministry, will readily suggest itself to any one who will reflect for a moment upon the nature of the subjects embraced in that department.

Pearson, Magee, Scott, Horsley, White, and Waterland were studied with a minuteness of detail, which brought every feature of their great works fully before the mind of the pupil; and they were acknowledged master-builders in that Temple, whose foundations

have been laid broad and deep upon the Rock of Ages.

Would that a journey, hitherto so uniformly tranquil, could have closed without one rough spot to mar its pleasures! Would that that noble Institution, which was Dr. Wilson's pride and boast, where his thoughts and affections centered, in whose growing prosperity, and consequently, increasing usefulness, none could have taken a deeper or more personal interest,—would that it could have continued ever on as it had been from the beginning, the most attractive of retreats for Theological study!

The acknowledged learning of its Professors, the finished preparation of its graduates had given it, most deservedly, a very high rank among the Institutions of our land. While differences of sentiment might and did exist, they had never, as yet, disturbed the harmony of the School, or in any way trammelled the wholesome influences of its Faculty. The discipline,—if discipline could be said to

exist at all, whose hand none felt,—the discipline so indispensable for the proper regulation of men wherever they may be gathered, or for whatever purpose, was of the most gentle and kindly character.

There were honest differences of opinion, upon subjects, too, of vast importance. There were well-marked, easily discernible grades of Churchmanship, among both Faculty and students. But these peculiarities, of whatever nature, were rudely and forcibly obtruded upon no one. They were just such differences as always have,—as always will exist. And so long as they endangered no essential article of saving faith, or clearly-ruled doctrine of the Church, such differences were tolerated. They might be discussed, indeed, with all the zeal and earnestness which are usually characteristic of men; especially in the maintenance and defence of their settled and matured religious opinions,—but always with charity,—with the disposition to concede to others what they themselves claimed, as

among the reserved rights of every honest and thoughtful man. All seemed to act with one accord upon the advice of good old Bishop Hall,—"though your brains be different, let your hearts be one."

An open conflict with a member of the Faculty, the thought of an attempt even, to curtail his influence with others, were things undreamed of. And as a result, they parted from those venerable guides upon the completion of their studies, utterly overwhelmed with gratitude for their assiduous labors in their behalf. Yea, and more, well knowing that they were followed by those same guides in their prayers to Heaven, for ever-renewed measures of grace, strength, wisdom, and zeal, in the prosecution of the great work for which they had striven to prepare them.

The seeds of their future usefulness had been sown there. The first fruits of the after-harvest of attainments were garnered there. The foundation-stone of the future fabric had been laid there. The sacred training of their

Alma Mater had made them all they were; the ever-progressive development of that same training could alone make them what they hoped to be. The Seminary had proved a peaceful, happy home to them for diligent study; and upon these tranquil hours they should often look back with the painful realization that they were gone, to return to them no more forever, when once dismissed to the earnest work of life. Such it had proved to hundreds. As such, they now look back upon it through many intervening years, in which they have so often sighed for the quiet peacefulness, for the relief from many and weighty cares and responsibilities, and from those struggles with the world which have made the bitter contrast only the more marked and striking.

But we now approach a chapter in this history, when the bright scene becomes clouded, when the happy reign of tranquillity was for a time suspended. Angry controversy raging, if not in, at least around that

once peaceful retreat, and making it, of all things to be dreaded and deprecated, the fruitful theme of angry religious newspaper controversy; where common courtesy, to say nothing of Christian love, are too often lost sight of, in bitter, personal, and uncharitable recrimination, if not in positive abuse.

It is a chapter which, on every account, I should much prefer should be passed over in utter, mournful silence. It revealed many, many weaknesses; it alienated many Christian hearts; it awakened many an unfounded suspicion; it placed men, good and true, in false lights; to say nothing of the withering influence of all such evil ingredients upon the future growth and usefulness of an Institution, whose most reliable dependence must ever be, the unshaken confidence of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the whole united Church.

It will ever be the source of devout gratitude to God with the many, that they knew only of this painful era from what they had heard or read. The cruel storm burst not

in their day. They were not involved in this angry strife of tongues and pens. And, as has been already intimated, the whole subject would now be gladly left to moulder with the musty pamphlets in which the unpalatable records are to be found, were it not for the marked bearing of this humiliating period upon the after-life of Dr. Wilson,—a bearing which cannot be ignored, without leaving a large and most important blank unfilled.

In unfolding this portion of the subject, I shall confine myself to a simple outline of the main facts, as gathered from the interesting Autobiography of the late venerated Dr. Turner, the official records of the period, and the private papers of Dr. Wilson. Thus leaving the war of pamphlets to be studied at leisure, by those whose controversial partialities may incline to such unprofitable labor.

One thing, it is to be hoped, may at this late date be confidently affirmed of all, of whatever side or party in the conflict. And it is this:—that with the gradual decay of a

wild, blinding excitement, with the sobering, mellowing influences of time, and calm reflection, they now read this chapter in their history with other eyes, and with the prayer, that God may forgive them whatever of bitterness, uncharitableness, or error, may have been the fruit of haste, anger, or inconsideration. But to proceed:—

Let us now, most reluctantly, advert to the leading outlines merely of this painful history.

At a meeting of the Trustees held in 1844, certain rumors decidedly unfavorable to the Seminary, were brought to the notice of the Board, through the medium of certain resolutions which had been adopted at a late Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina. These rumors were based upon the supposition that opinions having a strong, decided, and very pernicious leaning toward Romanism were propagated, and had already gained a most dangerous foothold among the students. The whole subject, as thus introduced, was referred to a committee, with instructions

to report upon the same to the Triennial Meeting of the Board, to be held in September. In October following, the General Convention was in session,—the triennial meetings of the Trustees being purposely so arranged as to be coincident with the sessions of that body. At that meeting of the assembled wisdom and piety of the Church, the whole subject of the Seminary was given a most fitting prominence in their deliberations. A list of 40 questions was adopted by the House of Bishops, the questions to be sent to each member of the Faculty, and to be answered, in writing, by a given date. The questions covered, or were designed to cover, the whole ground, as to the tone of teaching, the state of discipline, and the general deportment of the students. On that list of questions, of which very much might be said in detail, let one general remark suffice.

No one can read them without seeing at a glance that they were prompted and framed by two distinct classes of men; men holding

very diverse views upon certain leading doctrinal questions, as well as to the expediency and propriety of this particular method of dealing with that Institution. In other words, the language seemed to be that if great prominence must needs be given to what were regarded as errors in one direction, that attempt should be met, the movement checkmated by propounding equally significant questions, as to whether errors had not been propagated in the opposite direction. The bare questions of themselves, without any reference to cotemporary evidence of the fact, make this assertion too painfully evident, and thus stands revealed the whole character of the conflict.

To these questions each Professor returned an answer in his own way, in some instances in a very characteristic way, and upon his own responsibility.

At a meeting of the Trustees held Oct. 30th, with the answers above referred to before them, two resolutions were adopted, the one

denying "the existence of any evidences that superstitious or Romish practices are allowed or encouraged in the Institution." The other, "that the Bishops deem the publication of the questions of the Bishops, and the answers of the Professors, the most appropriate reply to the current rumors concerning the doctrinal teaching of the Seminary."

Thus far all is perfectly satisfactory. The note of danger had been early sounded, the warning had been as promptly heeded, and as a result, it was found to have been premature, or based only upon the authority of irresponsible rumors.

Shortly after this, however, representations were made to the Faculty that there were certain young men in their midst whose position was very questionable. Who, in error themselves, were also active in diffusing the poison. Meetings of the Faculty were immediately summoned by Dr. Wilson, the Dean, which were adjourned from day to day, for the careful, thorough investigation of what are

termed in some of Dr. Wilson's notes, "certain cases of discipline."

The whole resulted in a formal request by the Faculty for the withdrawal of two as students of the Institution, and in the voluntary retirement of some two or three others.

These meetings were held in June, 1845. The final report was read to the Faculty by the Dean, after which the notices were issued and served upon the parties interested.

Such are the main features of the case, as gathered from the records, to which should be added, what probably no one will dispute, that while the influence exerted by the Seminary was a judicious, wholesome, and truthful one; yet there were other influences, from without, but brought to bear within its walls, of a character far different, and for which the Faculty could in no sense be held responsible.

This detailed "report of cases of discipline" was read to the Faculty by Dr. Wilson, in his character as Dean, as before stated. But in the midst of doing so, he suddenly became so

confused as to be obliged for a short space to suspend the duty. He was aware of the difficulty himself, and begged the indulgence of those present for a moment. It was a painful scene to all who witnessed it, creating no little alarm, until their venerated colleague appeared to have again fully rallied, so as to be able to complete his sad task. This circumstance was subsequently related to the late Dr. Camman, of New York, who, in connection with Dr Welles, attended him in his weary illness. In the opinion of Dr. Camman, a justly celebrated pathologist, the inception of his disease might be dated from that moment, the disease itself being the result in a great degree, if not wholly, of the bitter, wearing trial through which he had been called to pass. Nothing which had ever occurred to him in the whole course of a long life, was known so to prey upon and depress his spirits, as did this period of deep anxiety. He looked haggard, careworn, utterly heart-sick. He spent sleepless nights, and refused

even his accustomed nourishment. The one fruitful source of distress was ever uppermost; he could not shake it off. It was bearing him down like a leaden burden.

All who saw him, however casually, were struck by the marked change which a few short weeks had wrought, and none were at a loss to account for the reason of that change. Nor did he ever fully recover from the cruel shock which that disastrous period had given him. For it regulated and controlled all his relations to the Seminary, even after his resignation of his Chair. And this was seen as long as he was spared the wonted enjoyment of his mental faculties in all their vigor, as well as again and again during the eclipse of those faculties, which, with the exception of some lucid, happy intervals, continued to the last.

This recalls a fact often observed in his case, that when apparently most completely under the benumbing influence of disease, or most disturbed by that peculiar nervous irri-

tation, which is one of its usual attendants, we often succeeded in arresting the gloomy train of thought by some reference to his favorite authors, upon whom he would for a time discourse with all the interest and intelligence which he had ever shown. Another circumstance akin to this was also noticed, and has been very feelingly adverted to by Dr. Turner, in his sermon commemorative of Dr. Wilson, a topic upon which he was abundantly qualified to speak, from his own experience and observation at the bedside of his venerated friend. It is this. That however wandering his mind might be, the very first audible sound of the familiar prayers of the Church, called back his scattered thoughts, fixing them upon God and the eternal world. In which prayers he ever joined heartily, audibly, and, of course, intelligently. There was a voice within answering to the voice without. A chord had been touched which never refused to vibrate in harmony, a calm repose, a heavenly expression of perfect peace rested

upon the very lineaments of his countenance however it might give place to other emotions, when the sweet control exercised by religious associations seemed to have melted away with the last fading accents of devotion.

The document prepared for the Faculty "in certain cases of discipline," and referred to above, was subsequently laid before the Trustees, and drew from the Rev. Dr. Haight the following note:—

"Dear Dr. Wilson:—I must tell you how very favorably your paper was received by the Trustees. It was listened to with the most marked attention, and drew forth from several of the ablest and most influential members the highest encomiums for its ability, its clearness, and its Christian love. I am satisfied that it has produced just the effect which we all desired should be produced. For my own part, I most devoutly thank God, that in these troublous times you are found at the head of the Seminary, and that we have enjoyed throughout the benefit of

your wisdom, prudence, and long experience. Praying our Heavenly Father to preserve you in health, and to bless you abundantly, temporally and spiritually,

"I am, etc."

On the 28th day of June, 1848, Dr. Wilson communicated his resignation of his Professorship to the Trustees of the Seminary in the following letter.:—

"SEMINARY, 28th June, 1848.

"To the Board of Trustees, etc.

"Gentlemen:—According to a notice previously given to two of the Bishops,* and to the members of the Standing Committee of the Trustees,† I hereby resign the Professorship of Systematic Divinity which I have held in this Institution during nearly twenty-seven years; the resignation to take effect on the 1st day of August next.

"My advanced age, (as I shall complete my seventy-second year very soon after the

* Bishops Brownwell and Potter, of Pennsylvania.

† Through the Rev. Dr. Berrian, Chairman.

commencement of the next term,) with the increased difficulties and responsibility of my Professorship in the present state of our Church, makes it very desirable to me to be relieved from those duties, and I trust that when considered in connection with the long period during which I have been engaged in the Seminary, it will not be regarded by the Trustees as an insufficient justification of the present resignation.

"Very respectfully yours, etc."

Now, although the fact "of advancing years" is alluded to in this letter, yet Dr. Wilson still retained both his mental and physical vigor almost unimpaired, and of this fact he could not himself have been entirely unconscious. But the great stress of his letter—and it was the great consideration which weighed so heavily upon his heart—the great stress is laid upon "the increased difficulties and responsibility of my Professorship *in the present state of our Church.*"

The resignation having been thus tendered, a unanimous and most flattering request was at once made by the Trustees, that he would withdraw the paper.

Dr. Wilson having heard of the result of the action of the Board through the medium of a friend, and before the arrival of the official notice, was evidently taken by surprise; he having been solemnly and most painfully impressed with the conviction that the step he had taken would be responded to with alacrity. In other words, that he was no longer regarded as either desirable or useful in his Professorial capacity. It was an impression for which, I believe, no other cause could be assigned than the depressed, unhappy state of his own feelings, as one of the results of this unhappy period.

The resignation was withdrawn, as requested, but with the assurance of its renewal at no very distant day. To show the effect of all this upon persons in no way connected with the Seminary, yet anxious for its con-

tinued well-being, I will quote in this connection a portion of a letter from the late Prof. Henry Reed, of the University of Pennsylvania. It is dated July 6th, 1848.

After stating that he had just heard of the withdrawal of the resignation, he adds: "I now take the very earliest opportunity of writing a few lines to say how much we are gratified at this last piece of intelligence. I can assure you that all your friends here were sincerely grieved, when they heard of your intended resignation. At the time, I felt a very strong desire to express regret to you, and to say all I could in the way of dissuasion, but I forebore, from an unwillingness to importune you on a subject which I thought might already have given you much solicitude, and on which your mind appeared to be made up finally. We are very much pleased to learn that such expressions of opinion and feeling have been made to you, as to change your decision. On your own account, and still more on account of the Seminary and the

Church, I am truly rejoiced to think of your continuance in the Professorship, which has so identified the Seminary with you."

The feeling thus affectionately and justly expressed was shared by hundreds in every quarter of our land, who had long known and valued the distinguished usefulness of that venerated man, especially in the important position which he had done so much to adorn.

Under the peculiar circumstances of the times, it would have proved a very severe blow to the Church, to say nothing of the equally difficult and delicate task of providing a successor who could have filled the vacancy.

Two years after this, on the 25th of June, 1850, the resignation was again pressed, and at last accepted; but with such expressions of heart-felt gratitude for his past labors, and with such regrets that they were now to be terminated, as must have contributed in no slight degree, to soften, if not efface, the painful recollections connected with a period in the

history of the Seminary, now gone, and it is to be hoped, never more to return.

In 1855 Dr. Wilson was elected a member of the Board of Trustees of the Seminary, by the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, to fill a vacancy in the number to which she was entitled, by the removal of a gentleman from that State. In his letter of declination, he assures the Trustees that he felt "gratified and honored by this additional evidence of their regard and approbation." He adds: "My interest in the Seminary continues strong, although I am no longer engaged in active duty to promote its welfare. But, after due consideration, I have concluded it is most proper, both for my own situation and the interests of the Seminary, that I should not accept the seat in the Board to which I have been elected. The causes which led to my resignation of the Professorship formerly held by me, appear to apply to the present subject with equal, and in some respects with geater force."

One additional mark of honor from the Trustees still awaited him. He received the appointment of Emeritus Professor,—an honor shared by him with Dr. Clement C. Moore, whose connection with the Institution ceased at the same period.

In the year 1821 Dr. Wilson received his degree of Doctor of Divinity, from the University of Pennsylvania; a mark of distinction the more valuable, as coming from a Board which has always been composed of the most distinguished gentlemen of Philadelphia; and from an Institution which has never been inconsiderately or unwisely lavish in the distribution of its Academic honors.

On the 7th of October, 1845, the degree of LL.D. was also conferred upon him, by Columbia College, New York; and in this case, under circumstances of high consideration, as will appear from the following note of the Rev. Dr. Haight. He says: "I must express to you the great pleasure I feel at the action of the Board of Trustees of Columbia College,

at their meeting this evening, from which I have just returned, in conferring upon you, by an unanimous vote, the honorary degree of LL.D.

"It is the first time in a long series of years, in which the Board have conferred this degree upon a Clergyman, being D.D. But in your case, from your character, and extensive and varied attainments, and your eminent services in the cause of religion and learning, there was no hesitancy in departing from the general practice. I rejoice at it, and that as a son may rejoice in the respect and honor shown to a father. The degree will be announced at the Commencement to-morrow."

After the resignation of his Professorship, some six years were passed by Dr. Wilson in quiet study, and in the friendly interchange of social intercourse, previous to the recurrence of the malady which, upon its return, excited for the first time seriously, the apprehensions of his family, and his numerous friends.

But knowing, even before the marked change had come, that he must feel very seriously, and as it might prove injuriously, the entire cessation of his long and uninterrupted course of accustomed labor, I ventured, upon one occasion, very delicately, to suggest the idea of his permanent removal to Philadelphia, the scene of his early childhood, the cherished home of all his earlier friends.

How keenly he felt the tie which bound him to his native State, is evident from the fact, that although for nearly thirty years it had ceased to be his place of residence, yet, as a Presbyter of the Church, he had never severed his connection with the Diocese of Pennsylvania. He had been ordained to the Diaconate and to his Priestly office, in Philadelphia, and to the Bishop of that Diocese his canonical obedience was due, down to the very moment in which his commission, with his life, were alike surrendered into the hands of God.

This circumstance had its weight in making

the suggestion referred to. It was proposing a return to his old home, and it was kindly received, he well knowing that it was prompted by the most kindly of motives.

But with a saddened expression, in the tone and manner, as of one who felt that the depths of his soul were stirred, he reminded me of the many fearful changes which twenty odd years had witnessed. The friends of youth, with but two or three exceptions, were all gone. He felt that such a return could not be otherwise than painful; for he should be reminded daily, and on every hand, that although in the city of his young affections, he should be there comparatively, but as a stranger among strangers.

No one could resist the melting tenderness of feeling which marked that interview. No one could ever again seriously renew a proposition only to rekindle so many saddening memories.

In this connection may be very appropriately noticed the character of Dr. Wilson's

social relations, the thoughtful, tender care exercised by him in behalf of all who in any way were dependent upon his exertions.

It must be borne in mind that his father was taken from him just as he had reached his twenty-second year, and had barely graduated as a member of the Bar. His father had been engaged in very extensive landed operations, which at one time promised to be of a highly remunerative character, but, resulting otherwise, he had left his family dependent.

Here were three brothers and two sisters, almost, if not entirely, thrown upon the hands of Dr. Wilson, whose wants were provided for, mainly through his own unaided exertions. And, nothing daunted at the prospect before him, he seems to have devoted himself to the great work of life as though perfectly untrammelled by any weight of domestic care. He succeeded, moreover, in what was the great end of his ambition, viz., in making adequate provision for those

who, in the Providence of God, had been entrusted to him. It was a weighty burden, but one which he had strength to bear both patiently and successfully.

This generous, noble care of family was extended subsequently to others, and to some who were connected with him only by the bonds of a long and intimate friendship.

Habits of prudent, careful living thus early made imperative by the circumstances in which he was placed, enabled him, in after-years, to acquire a very handsome competency. Of this, a noble portion has, since his decease, been consecrated, by his heir, to God's glory, in the erection of a neat and beautiful Chapel to the Episcopal Hospital, at Philadelphia, as a thank offering to God, and a memorial of him and of his young friend and son, in the Gospel, the Rev. Edward C. Babcock. A most befitting mode of hallowing the memory of so saintly a servant of God, and at the same time the source of instruction, of comfort and spiritual consolation to the sons and

daughters of sorrow, who are there provided with a refuge, and with more of the attention and comforts of a home, when overtaken by sickness or prostrated upon the bed of anguish. Upon the walls of the Chapel his name is recorded in a simple, but beautiful, inscription, and there, doubtless, his exalted virtues are remembered, while blessing God, "for all His servants who have departed this life in His faith and fear."

Such an example of pure, disinterested, and unostentatious devotion as that set by Dr. Wilson, had its effect not only in endearing to him those who were the immediate recipients of his kindness, but to all who could appreciate aright what is elevated, noble, and unselfish in human character. It was an example honored and appreciated by man, and one signally owned and rewarded by God.

In his own house he was distinguished by the same gentleness, the same refined and delicate regard to the feelings and wishes of others, which were so characteristic of him

elsewhere. He had nothing of that peculiar warmth and heartiness of manner which some are disposed to value at so high a rate, until taught by a saddening experience how often it is assumed to cover up a cold, selfish, and hollow heart. His affections betrayed themselves in no such noisy outbursts, or rapturous gushings of feeling, but in those gentle, quiet, winning ways, so difficult to describe in words, but which the eye of true affection seldom reads amiss. It was a something which you *felt* drawing you to him, conveyed in a look, a mere word, the veriest trifle it may be, a something of which you would scarcely care to speak, and yet, the key to his affections, and the assurance to you, that you were one of the objects on which those affections rested.

I have spoken of his disinclination to return to Philadelphia as a permanent residence. He continued, accordingly, to occupy a house in the immediate neighborhood of the Seminary, which he had purchased after his resignation of his office. He devoted himself to such

reading and study as inclination might prompt, as well as in receiving the visits of a large circle of friends. There seemed to be no waning of his interest in the books which had been his companions for years, nor in anything which pertained in any way to the welfare or advancement of the Church of his love. Save that he was released from the daily calls of duty upon him as a Professor, no one could discern the slightest change in the habits of his life.

A person more strictly methodical in everything was probably never known. His hours, whether for rising or retiring, were almost as fixed and regular as the motions of the sun itself.

Daily, at the close of his morning recitation, he could be seen preparing to start upon his habitual walk—a walk of about five miles, and usually in the same direction, if not over the same precise ground. On Sunday, and when the weather looked threatening, he could be seen pacing rapidly to and fro, from the ter-

race in front of the Seminary back to the fence which separated the yard in the rear of his house, a space of not more than a hundred feet. And here he devoted punctually the same amount of time which he would have given to his usual walk up the Island, or across the city in the direction of the East River. Here was one of the great secrets of his uniform good health, while it gave him the opportunity, as he was often heard to remark, of noticing the rapid strides of a great city, into what he had known once as almost exclusively an agricultural region.

And here, the narrative portion of this volume may most fitly close. The details of an illness, harrowing and distressing to all who witnessed it, because robbing him of the constant and unfettered use and control of those high mental powers which give him such a charm in the days of health;—those details belong to none save those whose province, nay, whose privilege it was to be with

and to minister unto him. He had his intervals of repose from imaginary trials, cares, and disquietudes, and occasional bright, lucid moments in which he seemed to be entirely conscious of his enfeebled bodily condition, and that the immediate past was all to him a blank. It was upon one of those occasions that he remarked to his devoted niece, that "in looking back upon his past life, he believed that he had tried to be faithful to his duty, and in looking forward he had no fear."

This, or something akin thereto, was the peaceful, hopeful result to which the review of life had brought him, and giving peace at the last, according to the blessed promise of that Word, upon which he built every hope for the future. It was saying more than would have been expected from one who was never disposed to exhibit to others his own internal, religious emotions. It was far more than was required to assure any whom he

should leave behind, that "to him to die was gain." But as an almost dying testimony, it only confirms the verdict of all who had ever known him,—that a more perfectly blameless character and example they have never known. And the chief interest of the remark just quoted, arises from the fact, that it shows his own realization of what was going on in an aged and enfeebled frame; and that his eyes were turned toward the goal, to the end of the race, and upon the final recompense of the just.

No one but with such a physical constitution as his, strengthened by daily habits of vigorous exercise, and a most regular and abstinent course of life, could have resisted so long as did his, the onward march of death.

One topic suggests itself in connection with this illness, which was merely hinted at in earlier pages of this volume, where allusion was made to the influences of Divine grace, combined with habits of strict self-discipline

in keeping under, and in due subordination, elements of character, which in some one or other of their varied forms, are found in all of human birth.

Sickness has its own mysterious, but expressive ways, of revealing at once, the nobler, and what, if not held in check, must ever be regarded as the weaker traits of human character. It was so in this case. Many might be disposed, and some unquestionably were accustomed to look upon the subject of this Memorial as the very impersonation of meekness, as one disposed to submit to anything short of a positive indignity, rather than vindicate and maintain his own rights; or, as some would say, his own manhood. By all who regarded him as destitute of spirit, and that too of a very marked, decided type, his character was read amiss.

An uncommonly high-toned spirit, coupled with inflexible firmness and decision, were qualities he was known to have possessed in

an eminent degree; as evidenced by the utter impossibility of moving him from aught suggested by reason, conscience, or a high sense of duty.

Hastiness or impatience he had never been known to exhibit; not because there were not in his nature the elements which betray their presence in some such way; but because he was pre-eminently the subject of that Heavenly wisdom "which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits."

It was one of the signal proofs of the indwelling of that grace by which we are renewed, and become transformed, — whose most complete victory consists in that "crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts," which also attests that "being dead unto sin, we are alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It had long been the expectation of the writer, and his hope, that when the end drew

near, he might be permitted to witness the departure of so pure a spirit, and to stand with those who wept around his grave, joining in the Church's august requiem, which speaks to us of the undying life of a soul, and the resurrection of the body. And although most kindly and specially summoned, yet the melancholy privilege was denied him by God, who was about to visit his own household with bereavement, in calling hence a dear son.

Two days before Dr. Wilson's decease he appeared to be entirely conscious, and fastened upon his niece one of those inexpressibly affectionate looks which were so peculiarly his own, while his countenance brightened with a sweet and placid smile; but the power of utterance was gone.

Quietly and calmly, so tranquilly that the last instant of respiration could scarcely be detected, "he fell asleep," on Thursday the 14th of April, 1859, aged 83 years.

His departure antedated a little that bright,

comforting Festival in the Church's annual round, which celebrates the Resurrection of our Lord, the pledge and earnest of our own; of which the opening grave ever reminds us, as the great balm for human sorrow, in all its varied forms.

As an appropriate and deserved mark of respect, the daily exercises of the Seminary were suspended until after the burial; the usual morning and evening services in the Chapel alone excepted.

Becoming notice of the event, and of its venerated subject, was taken also by the Faculty and Students, in their appropriate meetings, where words of something more than mere idle ceremony fell from the lips of deeply attached colleagues, of many happy years.

On the following Sunday afternoon the body was borne to St. Peter's Church, accompanied by the Faculty and Students, a large number of the Clergy of the city, and other friends of the departed.

The appointed services for the church having been concluded, the body remained before the altar, at which he had so often knelt, until the following day, when it was removed to Philadelphia, under the tender and affectionate oversight of Professors Turner and Johnson, the Rev. Dr. Beach, and Mr. Francis H. Babcock.

Mr. Babcock, now also deceased, and his most estimable family, had for years been numbered among the most intimate and beloved friends of Dr. Wilson; ever ready, whether in sickness or in health, by the most untiring and delicate attentions, to attest the depth of their affection. Upon Mr. Babcock, who had been throughout the whole of this dark period of sorrow, all that a noble heart could prompt, devolved, as was most fitting, all the arrangements in New York preparatory to the funeral. And as one of the peculiar friends of the surviving, he was also selected to accompany the bereaved to the completion of their sad errand.

The last earthly resting-place of this devoted servant of God—next to the grave—was before the altar of Christ Church, that venerable structure, around which so many sacred associations cluster, and where Dr. Wilson himself had received his commission to break the bread of eternal life.

He was buried, with the appropriate services, in the ground belonging to Christ Church, at the corner of Arch and Fifth Streets; and "with him is sundered one of the last and brightest ties that bound this generation to that which saw the first foundation laid of our Church in America."*

"The Fathers are in dust, yet live to God,
So says the Truth—as if the motionless clay
Still held the seeds of Life beneath the sod,
Smouldering and struggling till the judgment day.
And hence we learn with reverence to esteem
Of these frail houses, tho' the grave confines;
Sophist may urge his cunning tests, and deem
That they are earth—but they are heavenly shrines."

* "The Church Journal."

The goal has been reached, and he is now one of that bright cloud of witnesses by whom we are encompassed,—by whose successes we are encouraged; emulating their virtues, and ever remembering that we are still one with them; following Christ, as they also have followed Him, that we may be indeed one with them in the fellowship of Angels, and Archangels, of God, and His Christ, of the Church triumphant in heaven.

Such is the Communion of all the saints; a truth, than which in its bearings upon us amid scenes of vicissitude and change, there are but few capable of ministering equal comfort.

The body, aye, the very form on which we doated so fondly, is indeed beyond our reach, and a melancholy process is going on in the dark and silent chamber where it has been laid to rest. The eye can no longer delight itself with its loved proportions; the ear can no longer drink in the winning accents of the

familiar voice. And yet, in spirit, in heart, in hope, in the blessed Communion of the Church, we are all one. A union which is the foretaste of one more intimate, more endearing still, over which sorrow, change, and death can have no power. We have a common Saviour,—we have a common hope; the hope of that blessedness, upon a portion of which they have already entered, and do now enjoy.

We have, with Him, a common mark, the mark "whereby Christian men are discerned from others;" it is the mark of our discipleship.

Even the tender, watchful shepherd of this world has his appropriate mark, whereby to distinguish the sheep and lambs of his own flock; and the Heavenly Shepherd has His also. The solemn moment which saw that mark impressed upon the adult or infant brow, witnessed also the fulfillment of the Apostle's declaration. Then it was that we

were brought "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

From that hour we were put in Communion with the Church visible on earth, and with that great multitude, whom the Apostle beheld in vision, "standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb of God, having the Father's name written on their foreheads, who cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb."

Yes! there is life in death,—life even in the grave, where corruption and the worm must do their strange, their melancholy work. Death may dismantle the form which has been consecrated to God, and crucified to the world; in which the warfare of life has been finished, and which, though scarred and wounded in the conflict, is still the temple of

the Holy Ghost. And therefore it is, that our Spiritual mother, who took us in her arms in Holy Baptism, will also gently lay our bodies down to the sleep of dust; and while addressing to sorrowing attendants around the open grave, the consolations which attend the passage hence of a soul "in the communion of the Catholic Church, in the confidence of a certain faith, in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope;" her language will be the language of her Lord, "thy brother shall rise again."

And when, with all who have gone before, we shall have fully tasted our portion of the joys and sorrows which come ever mingled in our earthly cup, may the eye of faith brighten, as the eye of sense shall fail, with the reflected glories of that bright morning yet to dawn, the glorious morning of our Resurrection!

And now, reverently laying this humble chaplet upon the sacred tomb of one, beloved

on earth, now owned of God in Paradise; be it the daily prayer of him who writes, and of him who may be tempted to read this imperfect sketch, that we all "may have grace so to follow his good example, that, with him, we may be partakers of God's heavenly kingdom."

Life thus spent, shall lead to that unfailing rest which God has reserved in store for every redeemed, accepted child,—and in death, lifting his eyes above the pains of dissolution, and the temporary dishonors of the grave, he shall see in it but the peaceful transit of a soul to its eternal home in heaven.

Archbishop Leighton has said, with his wonted beauty, that "there is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heaven, which is called the milky-way; so, though the shining of every private Christian is not so

much severally remarkable, yet the concourse and meeting of their light together, will make a bright path of holiness shine in the Church."

We, however, have been engaged in following the brighter pathway of one of those more glorious orbs, which has been removed from our earthly firmament, only to shine as a star, forever and ever in Heaven.

"If in the flower such beauty lies,
Which blooms at morn, at evening dies,
And in each form of life around
Mysterious wisdom hides profound;
What shall our heav'nly bodies be
When cloth'd with immortality?"

"If in Thy guiding hand above
The glorious hosts are seen to move,
And all creation here below
Thy daily ordering seems to know;
How much more Thine unseen control
Must be around the human soul,
Prepar'd beyond the starry skies,
To put on endless destinies!"

"THE CATHEDRAL."

APPENDIX.

SUBSTANCE of remarks made to the Senior Class, while examining the Calvinistic and Arminian Controversy on the course of St. Paul's reasoning in the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; after they had recited the first part of "Bishop White's Comparative Views."

There are two points examined by the Bishop, on which it will be useful to offer some additional remarks. (I.) That stated in page 67, relative to the repeated application by the Apostle, from time to time, of his reasoning to what is conceived to be his main subject:— and (II.) the supposed objection stated and answered in pages 100 to 105.

(I.) The first of these subjects cannot be well understood without attentively following the *course*, and tracing the *connection* of the Apostle's remarks throughout the whole of the first eleven chapters. They are so closely connected together, and so dependent on each other, that the true meaning of the *several parts*, if

considered *separately*, cannot clearly appear, until their *application* to the main subject is traced. My object then is of a general character, and will not render it necessary to enter upon an examination of the differences of opinion on the *exact interpretation* of the several *particular arguments*. I intend to show that the Apostle himself *states his subject* explicitly, and that all his subsequent reasoning and principles bear upon *that alone;* which subject is not the *predestination* and *election* of individuals to *eternal life*, according to either the Arminian or Calvinistic theory, (on which not a word is directly or indirectly spoken in the Epistle,) but the character of the *dispensations* under which God determined to place *mankind* in *this life*, whereby *all men* would be enabled to obtain that blessing, *if they availed themselves of the means provided for them.*

As you have already, in your recitations with Dr. Turner, in the department of the criticism and interpretation of Scripture, minutely examined the questions arising upon the several parts of these chapters, and have now recited the first part of Bishop White's Comparative Views, it will be easy for you to follow me in the general remarks proposed to be made, and to perceive their force and bearing on the alleged subject. In them, I do not expect that any particulars will occur which will strike you as *novel* in principle; as I believe there are none which may not be maintained by the au-

thority of respectable commentators. If there be *any* novelty, it must be only in the representation of the general *design* and *plan* of the Apostle's reasoning,—the close connection of its different parts with each other,—and the manner in which each is applied to support the *asserted* and *declared* purpose of the writer.

The Apostle, after his introduction, extending to the 15th verse, expressive of his regard for the Roman Christians, and a desire to provide for their instruction in the Gospel, proposes his subject in the 16th verse; the language of which clearly refers to what is *well known* and *admitted* to have been the subject of a warm and interesting controversy at the time, and to which the whole of the subsequent reasoning will appear to be applicable. The proposition contained in the verse embraces three particulars, all of which were opposed to the opinions and prejudiced expectations of the Jewish converts, viz., (1,) that the Gospel *only*, without the *Law*, which they sought to impose on the Gentiles, and to observe themselves as *necessary* to salvation, was the powerful means provided by God for salvation; (2,) *to every beliver;* (3,) and to the *Gentile, equally with the Jew.*

The first proof of the truth of this proposition is of considerable length, but clearly connected, extending to the 30th verse of the 3d Chapter. It establishes these principles, (1,) that neither the Jew nor the Gentile

could look for acceptance with God on account of their obedience to the law of nature or the Mosaic Law, under which they were respectively placed, and therefore equally stood in need of some new method of obtaining His favor,—(Ch. i., v. 18,—Ch. iii., v. 20;) (2,) that the Gospel alone had provided that new method,—(Ch. iii., vs. 21–28;) and (3,) that it was suitable to the character of the Deity, and to His relation to His creatures, that the benefit of it should be equally extended to the Gentile as to the Jew,—(Ch. iii., vs. 29, 30.)

To complete this proof, the Apostle, after stating in Ch. i., v. 18, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," proceeds to show that all mankind were objects of that wrath, instead of being entitled to look for the Divine favor. For this purpose he first views the moral character and condition of the Gentile nations, which is contained in the remainder of Ch. i. The description of it is indeed given in dark and gloomy colors, and fully shows that these nations were justly liable to God's condemnation; because, "they knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things as were laid to their charge, were worthy of death," "not only *did* the same, but had pleasure in them that do them,"—(v. 32.)

The Jews would readily admit the justice of the condemnation of the Gentiles; but had a high opinion of their own condition before God, and of their security

from danger in consequence of the peculiar privileges bestowed upon them, as being the descendants of Abraham, and heirs of the promises to him,—and being brought by circumcision into covenant with God as His peculiar people,—and having received through Moses the sacred oracles containing His revealed will. But the Apostle next turns his attention to their state and character; and shows them that when they condemned the Gentiles, (as they were very ready to do, even to an uncharitable extent,) they indeed condemned themselves, inasmuch as they did the same things. And he proceeds to convict them by the evidence of clear facts and by the declarations of their own Scriptures, that they were sinful and disobedient likewise, and equally liable to the wrath of God, and were equally destitute of any rightful claim to blessings which were promised only to *obedience*. This discussion continues from Ch. ii., v. 1, to Ch. iii., v. 19. In the course of it, in order to convince the Jews that their reliance on their peculiar privileges as God's covenanted people, notwithstanding their sinfulness, was wholly unwarranted and unreasonable, he introduces *principles* by which the judgment of God would be regulated in relation to both Jew and Gentile; that "in the day of wrath and revelation of His righteous judgment," He "will render to *every man* according to his deeds,"—bestowing "eternal life" on

all who seek it by "patient continuance in well-doing,"—but inflicting "indignation and wrath on those who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, whether they be Jews or Gentiles;" "for there is no respect of persons with Him,"—(vs. 5 to 16.)

I state the Apostle to lay down in this passage *a principle, according to which God will give judgment,* and not to intend that when this principle was applied there were any of either class of men who could escape the punishment, and obtain the reward, because they rendered the obedience required. This *fact* was not pertinent to his object, and indeed would be inconsistent with the obvious design of his remarks on this *first proof,* which we are considering. For he designs to establish that *all* are disobedient, and sinful, and are convicted *by the Law,* as sinners, and liable to punishment; and therefore, equally, whether Jew or Gentile, stand in need of some new method of obtaining the Divine favor and blessing; inasmuch as disobedient sinners can obviously have no *claim* to the benefit of *obedience.* With a similar view, the remarks on circumcision are introduced in the close of the 2d Ch., vs. 25 to 29. In *that covenanting rite* the Jews felt great confidence, as securing to them the favor of God. But the Apostle teaches them, that though "circumcision would profit them, *if they kept the law,* yet if they were

breakers of the law, their circumcision is made uncircumcision,"—(add vs. 28 and 29.) By these principles, the charge of the Apostle against the Jews that they, as well as the Gentiles, were sinful, and violators of the law, and of their own peculiar covenant with God, was strongly maintained; and their own partial expectations of favor were shown to be groundless and unwarrantable.

These remarks on the condition and character of the Gentiles and Jews respectively, lead to the general conclusion contained in Ch. iii., vs. 19, 20, that "all the world are guilty before God; and therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." *All*, on being compared with its precepts, are convicted of being sinners; that they cannot therefore have any claim to the blessings promised to *obedience;* and are all equally in need of some other method of obtaining God's favor.

The Apostle then, in vs. 21 to 28 inclusive, describes the method of justification proposed, and offered to all by the Gospel, viz., "by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood,—that

God might be *just*, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,"—by which method, "boasting," on the part of man, "is wholly excluded;" and "a man is justified by faith ('and not by') without the deeds of the law."

The Apostle then, in vs. 29 and 30, turns the attention to the remaining particulars stated in his first proof, viz., that it was suitable to the character of the Deity and His relation to His creatures, that the benefit of this new method should be equally extended to the Gentile as to the Jew,—for which he offers the conclusive reason,—that as God is the God of *both* these classes of men, not of the Jew only; and both classes have equal need of this benefit, He will extend it to both, and will justify both in the same manner,—"seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."

(II.) The *second* proof given in support of the Apostle's proposition contained in Ch. i., v. 17, is presented in Ch. iii., v. 31, and Ch. iv. throughout. It may indeed be considered as embracing two distinct proofs; one of them connected with the remarks on *circumcision*, and the other with those on the law. But, as both relate to the erroneous opinions of the Jews on those subjects, which the Apostle here supposes to be urged by a Jewish objector against the doctrine of justification

which had been just explained, they may be more clearly examined together. The general objection supposed to be urged is, that the doctrine of the Apostle is contrary to the promises and privileges made to and conferred upon their nation by God in the covenant of circumcision and the Mosaic law; and we well know from historical evidence that the Jewish converts, in the controversy then existing, did insist that circumcision and the law were necessary means of justification. The design of the Apostle is to answer the objection, and to show that his doctrine is supported by their own Scriptures, instead of being contrary to them.

This appears to me to be the objection referred to by the Apostle in Ch. iii., v. 31, and which he supposed might perhaps be suggested by an adversary. On this interpretation of the verse, it is naturally connected with and leads to the discussion contained in Ch. iv. A very common interpretation of it is indeed that the objection supposed by the Apostle is, that the law—meaning the *moral* law—is made useless, or that obligation to obey it is destroyed, by the doctrine of justification by faith; and that the Apostle on the other hand insists that, so far from this, the obligation and motives to obedience are confirmed and made stronger by the Gospel:—which subject, however, is supposed not to be *explained* here, but to be resumed in Ch. vi.

The verse, on this interpretation, contains an important truth; and its language, if taken *alone* and disjoined from the context, might perhaps allow the interpretation; and the same truth is maintained in Ch. vi. But it does not appear to me to be the Apostle's meaning in this passage. The interpretation supposes him to pass over an important objection without answer, (*except a general denial, without explanation,*) and without any apparent motive for deferring it, and to proceed to a *distinct* subject. No designed connection can be shown between this verse and Ch. vi., which is very clearly connected with, and naturally introduced by what immediately precedes it. On the interpretation preferred, the Apostle continues (as will be seen) a connected and uninterrupted course of reasoning. For his meaning then, in reply to the objection as before stated, is, that so far from making the law void, he *establishes* or *maintains* it: for his doctrines of justification by faith, and of the equal rights of the Gentiles to Gospel blessings, are the same which are contained in the *law* itself, taken in a *large sense*, (as it often is,) as embracing their *whole dispensation.* And the interpretation of the verse here adopted is not only supported best by the context, but also agrees with the opinions of able commentators, both ancient and modern. I give as a specimen, the remarks of Theodoret on the verse:

"For from the beginning, both the law and the prophets divinely revealed the doctrines concerning faith: maintaining faith therefore, we confirm the law.

"Afterward he gives proof of these things. And though he was able to produce very many testimonies of the prophets, he goes to the very root of the Jews, and shows that the patriarch Abraham obtained the righteousness which is by faith." (See Dr. Turner's note, and Prof. Stewart's also.)

But whatever interpretation of this verse may be preferred, it is clear that in the 4th Ch. the Apostle *does proceed* to prove that his doctrines agree with those contained in their law. The course of reasoning appears to be *this.* In Ch. iii., v. 31, the objection was supposed to be urged that his doctrines were (as before stated) opposed to the law and the promises to their nation; but the Apostle replied generally, that so far from making void the law, he established it. In answer, the objector refers to the case of Abraham, who, he asserts, was justified by *works;* particularly alluding to the precept of circumcision, and "had therefore whereof to glory." But the Apostle denies this, and proves from the account given in the Scriptures, that Abraham himself was justified by "*faith*," "which was counted to him for righteousness,"—(vs. 3 to 5.) This was *before the law.* The case of David *under the law* is then

added; who expected justification by obtaining forgiveness of sins, and their not being imputed to him, and not by establishing his *obedience* and *innocence*,—(vs. 6–8.) Thus, the Scriptures of the Old Testament prove that this was God's method of justification during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, as well as by the Gospel. And this doctrine is clearly laid down by a very eminent contemporary writer,—Clement, of Rome. So far as to justification by faith.

In the following verses, (9th to 12th,) the Apostle directs his remarks to the proof of the other part of the proposition in Ch. i., v. 17, viz., that the same blessing was extended to the Gentile, though uncircumcised. The proof is drawn from the same case of Abraham. It is asked, "Cometh this blessing" (of justification by faith) "upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?" And it is then shown from the circumstances of the transaction with Abraham, that it was designed for both,—that Abraham's faith "was reckoned to him for righteousness, while he was in uncircumcision, and he afterward received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the Father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised,—that righteousness might be imputed to them also." And as to the circumcision, the Apostle in verse 12 de-

clares that "the blessing did not belong to those who were circumcised, unless they also followed the steps of Abraham's faith." (Dr. McKnight's remarks in preface to the Chapter may perhaps be adverted to.)

The Jews also rested upon the law, as entitling them to peculiar claims. This the Apostle next examines in vs. 13 to 17 inclusive. The argument on this point is very similar to one contained more at large in the Epistle to the Galatians,—Ch. iii., vs. 6–18,—which, if compared with this, will throw light upon it. The tenor of the argument is, that the blessing of Abraham and his seed was by *promise*, that it was not *through the law*, but through the righteousness of faith,—that if they which are under the law are the heirs of the blessing, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; for the law could not bestow the blessing, inasmuch as "it worketh wrath, for where no law is, there is no transgression." It convicts all as sinners, and subjects them to wrath; that therefore the blessing is of *faith*, that it might be *by grace*, to *the end the promise might be sure to all the seed,—not to that only which is of the law*, (the Jews,) *but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham*, (his *spiritual seed*, whether *Jews or Gentiles*,) for that Abraham is the *father of* US ALL,—the Gentiles being expressly comprehended in the promise to Abraham, since God declared to him, "I have

made thee a father of many nations." His reasoning here likewise maintains the *whole proposition* in Ch. i., v. 17, showing from the Old Testament the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith, and the equal claim to the blessing in both Jew and Gentile. He then describes (vs. 18–25) the excellence and firmness of Abraham's faith, though severely tried, and which was therefore imputed to him for righteousness; and he adds, for the instruction and comfort of all converts, that "it was not written *for his sake alone;* but that it was imputed to him for us also," (that is, according to the preceding proof, *to us Christians, whether Gentiles or Jews,*) "to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

In the four chapters which have been now reviewed, though the Apostle designs to establish and explain the doctrine of justification by faith, yet he does not examine it as a *distinct* subject, but in connection with the equal rights of the Gentiles, stated along with it in Ch. i., v. 17, which was likewise disputed, and which he was solicitous to establish.*

Chapter v., vs. 1–11, contains the third proof of the

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* See Whitby in loc.

proposition in the verse just referred to. He was naturally led to describe the blessings enjoyed by those who truly believed, and were justified in the manner stated at the close of the preceding chapter. These would be important in themselves, for whatever purpose they were introduced. But they are here stated as the ground of another proof of the truth of the said proposition, *drawn from facts;* that the Deity Himself had given *His attestation,* that He had received into a state of reconciliation, *by faith only, all believers, whether Gentiles or Jews,* by *bestowing on them indiscriminately,* the blessings of the Gospel; particularly the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and His ordinary influences, producing in them the Christian graces. "Therefore," he says, "being justified by faith, we" (referring to the *collective body* mentioned at the close of the 4th Chapter, comprehending, as is evident, Gentiles as well as Jews, *i.e.* all who believe as Abraham did) "have peace with God, *through our Lord Jesus Christ;* by whom also *we have access by faith,* into *this grace wherein we stand,* and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." In the following verses he enumerates their Christian graces, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, whereby the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts. These were proofs that they *actually received* and improved the Gospel benefits. It is not necessary

to suppose, with Mr. Locke, that the Apostle speaks in this passage of the Gentile Christians alone, including himself with them as being their peculiar Apostle, for the proof from the *indiscriminate* bestowal of the gifts and graces of the Spirit *in Gentile as well as Jew*, is equally strong to establish that God had manifested that He received *both* to the enjoyment of the benefits of the Gospel, and *by faith only*. This inference, he knew from the Scripture history, was drawn *in this manner*, and from the *same* facts, both by the Apostles, and the body of assembled Christians, at the time of the first conversion of the Gentiles. (See McKnight in loc.)

Thus when Peter was sent to Cornelius, the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the Centurion and his assembled friends, was regarded by the Apostle as an evidence from God that they ought to be baptized, and thus admitted *as Gentiles* to the benefits of the Gospel,—(Acts, x., vs. 44–48.) When called to account at Jerusalem for his conduct in that case, he justified himself by relating the vision to Cornelius, and the fact that as he himself began to speak, "the Holy Ghost fell on them," (viz., Cornelius and his house,) "as on us at the beginning." "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand

God?" The assembled brethren were immediately satisfied, and drew the same conclusion as the Apostle had, "then hath God also to the Gentiles, granted repentance unto life,"—(Acts, xi., vs. 15–18.) And likewise at the Council of Jerusalem, the same Apostle addressed them thus: "Ye know that God made choice among us, that the Gentiles," etc.—(Acts, xv., vs. 7–11.)

The remainder of this 5th Chapter (vs. 12 to end) contains another proof of the Apostle's doctrine, drawn from the reason and nature of the case, and the character of the Deity. The general purport of it is, that as all men, Gentile as well as Jew, had suffered by the fall of Adam, whereby sin and death had been entailed on all, it was much rather reasonable and just, and more consistent with the Divine attributes, that all should be benefited by the death of Christ; by obtaining justification through His blood, and sanctification by the gift of His Spirit. The passage has been particularly, and at some length, examined in the course of the recitations; and it is not designed now to enlarge upon it. That there are difficulties in determining the exact interpretation of several of its clauses, is generally admitted. But there appears to be little in clearly ascertaining its general import, or the manner and force with which it is applied to support the Apostle's doctrine. It has been much used in the controversies respecting the full

consequences to mankind from Adam's sin; some contending that *temporal death* alone is here mentioned; others that this death and the corruption of man's nature are combined; and others add, condemnation to *eternal death.* My own persuasion is, that the first two are stated in the passage, but that nothing in it proves the last, though it may be shown from other parts of Scripture, that eternal death was a part of the penalty denounced upon sin, and must have been endured by every sinner, supposing the means for his redemption were not provided: (a supposition, however, forbidden by the character of God, which opposes a belief that He would have allowed the human race to be continued, if inevitably liable, without personal fault, to such a fate, destitute of any means of relief from it.)

But it seems well deserving of observation, that it was unnecessary for the Apostle to give a complete and exact detail of *all the consequences of the fall.* His argument is equally clear and forcible, whichever of the above interpretations is adopted. It will still urge the truth that it is reasonable that as all had thus suffered the consequences of sin (whatever those sufferings may be) without *personal* fault, but through *Adam's* fall, that the remedy provided for relief from those sufferings should be equally extensive; and the means actually offered in the Gospel do place it in the power of all who

will employ them, to obtain that relief; and also to secure the promised blessings thereby restored to them, after they had been forfeited and lost.

The 5th Chapter appears to me to conclude the reasoning of the Apostle directly in support of the truth contained in Ch. i., v. 17, though it is repeatedly alluded to in the subsequent parts of the Epistle, and the points more immediately discussed are closely connected with it.

The 6th Chapter is employed in defending the doctrine of salvation by *grace* through *faith* from an objection,—that it destroyed or diminished the restraints from sin, and the obligations to holiness; which the Apostle denies and disproves. This was before alluded to in connection with the remarks in Ch. iii., v. 31. It is thought unnecessary to make here any further observations on it, inasmuch as I am not aware that there is any difference of opinion on the design of the chapter, between the parties to the controversy which we are examining.

Then in Chapter vii., vs. 1–6, the Apostle proceeds to show that the Mosaic law, so far from being necessary to be observed by the Gentiles, had expired, and ceased to be obligatory even upon the Jews. He compares the relation of the Jews to their law to a marriage contract, which is annulled by the death of either of the

parties: and they, "having *become dead* to the law by the body of Christ," (or delivered from the law, *that being dead* wherein they were held,) "should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that they should bring forth fruit unto God." Thus the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, had nothing to look to for justification, except the Gospel only. (Compare Gal. ii., vs. 19, 20; 2 Cor. xi., v. 2.)

NOTE.—Such is the elaborate Essay referred to in the body of this work, "On the Design and Argument of the Epistle to the Romans." I have before me, in the author's handwriting, a very material condensation of the above. But it appeared preferable, especially for those who have never studied the outline of the argument of St. Paul, that the Essay should be given in its complete form.

SERMON.

"ON THE MOTIVES TO PERSEVERANCE, NOTWITHSTANDING SUFFERINGS FOR RELIGION."

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, for Thy sake were we killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."—*Romans*, viii. 35–37.

There are few passages of Scripture which exceed or equal that of which our text is part, in fervor, strength, and impressive eloquence. To ascertain clearly the meaning of St. Paul, in the verses just read, and to perceive their full force and beauty, it is necessary to examine the connection in which they stand with the preceding parts of the chapter.

The verse to which, as I believe, they have a direct relation, stands at a considerable distance from them. But this circumstance will excite no surprise, nor suggest any objection in the minds of those acquainted with the peculiar character of this Apostle's writings.

To them it is well known that after introducing a subject to the notice of those whom he addresses, he frequently digresses from it immediately for the purpose of explaining some point related to, and illustrating or proving it, and after a digression of considerable length returns to the subject which he had before brought into view, without distinctly marking, in either case, the transition.

In the passage which we are now to consider, the connection may, it is believed, be more clearly shown than in many others to which that remark applies.

To point out that connection, to trace and illustrate the series of the Apostle's remarks, leading him to the animated address to the Roman Christians contained in our text, to fix thus its true meaning and to draw some useful inferences from the whole, is my present design.

The Christians, in the early ages of the Church, were exposed to great dangers and sufferings in consequence of embracing the Gospel. It was reasonably to be apprehended that the severity of their afflictions might, through the infirmity of nature, impel them to abandon the religion which they experienced to be productive of effects so distressing.

Those effects were also apparently very inconsistent with the representations of the design and tendency of that religion, to bestow the highest blessings upon such as embraced it. To defend Christianity from an objec-

tion which might hence be urged against it, and also to arm Christians against the hazard of apostacy from their holy faith, were important objects in the view of the Apostle, both in this and in several others of his Epistles. He therefore introduces, in the 17th verse of this chapter, the subject of the afflictions which they so generally endured. It has been justly remarked that he advances prudently to the harsh subject, for that he does not mention it till he had raised their thoughts to the highest object of joy and pleasure; the happiness and glory of a joint inheritance with the ever-blessed Son of God.*

We may add, further, that he also represents their submitting to the sufferings appointed by God as intimately united with their acquisition of that inheritance for which they are necessary means.

"We are the children of God," says the Apostle, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; *if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together.*"

Having thus introduced the disagreeable subject in a manner benevolently designed to avoid giving a shock to the feelings of those whom he addressed, naturally and strongly averse from the endurance of afflictions, the Apostle proceeds to set forth in order the important

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* See Taylor in Macknight in loc.

blessings bestowed by the Gospel, supplying them with support and consolation, and even joy, under the severest sufferings, and presenting the most powerful and persuasive motives for adhering, in defiance of those sufferings, to the Holy religion which they had embraced.

(I.) He directs their view to the great reward which that religion set before them, to be bestowed on those who faithfully received and adhered to it. "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* And the more deeply to impress their minds with a sense of its high importance, and of the reasonableness of confidence in its being bestowed, he represents it as the object of earnest and general expectation and desire; and that the hope of it was justly excited and supported by the consideration of the manner in which they had become subject to the vanities and miseries of their present state.

For, in the first of these points, he declares that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."† And that "we know that the whole creation groaneth and travailleth in pain together until now,"‡ waiting for it. "And not only so, but ourselves also,"—we Christians, the most highly favored part of that creation, "which have already the

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* Verse 18. † Verse 19. ‡ Verse 22.

first fruits of the Spirit,"—the Gospel blessings conferred through that Holy Agent, as an earnest of the greater harvest which shall succeed hereafter, "even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."*

How animated and glowing is this description of the eagerness with which this future glory was looked for and desired! There are, indeed, different opinions on the meaning of the word here translated "creature" and "creation," (κτισις,) which, in the original, is the same in both verses. Some commentators† suppose that it is to be understood in its most extensive meaning, and comprehends the irrational and inanimate as well as the rational parts of our world; the whole of which is, by a bold but usual figure, personified; and as the whole had suffered in consequence of the fall of man, the whole is also represented as longing for the event which would effect a glorious deliverance. And such is said to be the natural import of the expression, when connected, as it is, in the last of the verses, with the words "the whole." *One* objection‡ made to this interpretation does not appear to have much weight. It is, that the Apostle would not, in an argumentative Epistle like that to the Romans,

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* Verse 23.

† Koppe, Rosenmuller, Michaelis, 4 Kop., 393, also Doddridge. See Theodoret III., 434, on Eph. i. 10.

‡ Ammon in Koppe, vol. iv. . 393

void of poetic ornament, introduce so bold a figure. But to this it may be replied, that though the Epistle be argumentative, yet when, in the course of his argument, the Apostle finds it necessary or useful to describe the exalted blessings designed to be disclosed and bestowed by the Gospel, the subject thus introduced is one more apt than any other to warm his breast, to elevate his thoughts, and to prompt to the use of bold and glowing figurative language suited to the ardor and elevation of his own mind.

And such is the subject introduced in the verses under consideration. Nevertheless, as the word cannot admit so extended a meaning as that just mentioned, in all the verses in which occurs, but must in several of them be limited to the rational part of our creation; it appears reasonable to adopt an uniform interpretation, and to give it that limited meaning throughout the whole passage. And this is agreeable to the opinion of another class of eminent commentators, and no doubt accords with a similar use of the term in other parts of the New Testament.*

Whichever interpretation, however, is preferred, the beauty or force of the passage will not be materially affected; nor will the general purport of the Apostle's reasoning be at all altered. For, in either, he still sets

* See Macknight in loc. Also Whitby.

forth the general, earnest desire and longing for that future life and immortality, which was at length brought into *full* light by the Gospel.

On the other subject,—the reasonableness of the expectation entertained of *the glorious deliverance so ardently longed for*,—the Apostle remarks, that "the creature was made subject to vanity,"—that is, to the corruption, wants, and miseries of our present condition,—"not willingly, but by reason of Him,"—that* is God,†—who hath subjected the same, with the hope, "nevertheless, that it should be delivered from this bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."‡

(II.) Such is the first Gospel blessing here mentioned by the Apostle for the consolation and support of the Christians under their sufferings. But this blessing could not at present be enjoyed; it was only an object of hope; and was to be waited for with patience.§

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* "*διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα*, may perhaps refer to *Adam* as the *occasion* of the *subjection*, which took place *on his account*, (as *διὰ* with the accusative suggests,) but still this will represent Adam as the *final cause*, or reason of it, not the *efficient*. God only could *subject* the creature thus; especially He only could subject it, *in hope of a deliverance*,—both subjection and deliverance were then *coeval parts* of the Divine *plan* or *ordinance*, and so here represented by the Apostle.

† Macknight, Koppe, Rosenmuller, Turner, *acc.* Whitby, *contra*.

‡ Verses 20, 21. § Verses 24, 25.

And as it might be feared that, in many instances, the future, distant blessing would not possess sufficient power over the heart to oppose the influence of present strong temptation to apostacy by some afflictions, the Apostle enumerates others promised by the Gospel, and enjoyed even now in this life. "Likewise the Spirit also," says he, "helpeth our infirmities."* The weakness of human nature may dispose you to yield to the pressure of calamity, and to renounce your religion to escape it. But you will not be left to rely only on your own powers. The Holy Spirit, by His aiding influences, will sustain and strengthen you.

The existence of such weakness is not disguised by the Apostle, nor the need we have of Heavenly assistance. Indeed, he sets forth that need in strong terms, by selecting a particular, striking proof of it;—that the aid of the Spirit is requisite even for the direction of our ordinary devotions to God. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." But herein the Spirit of God will, by His presence with us, and His holy and enlivening influence, guide us in our petitions, sanctify and animate our prayers, and render them acceptable, so that we may be assured that they will be favorably heard.†

(III.) Another blessing at present enjoyed, to which

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* Verse 26. † Verses 26, 27.

the Apostle next directs the attention of the Roman Christians, is the constant protection of the Divine Providence. They might not, indeed, be immediately or at all delivered from their sufferings, in answer to their prayers; for such deliverance might not be for their real benefit. Yet notwithstanding they could repose confidence in the Providential goodness and power of the Deity, who would "make all things"—even afflictions themselves—"work together for good to them that love God."*

(IV.) But the important blessings already noticed, which were procured by the Gospel, could not be interesting and efficacious to those to whom St. Paul was writing, unless they were assured that those blessings were Divinely intended for, and could be obtained by themselves. Now the Roman Christians consisted partly of Jews, and partly of Gentiles; the latter of whom had not been engaged to pay obedience to the law of Moses. And it is well known, from the Sacred history itself, as well as from other sources, that it was then a subject of warm and zealous disputation whether obedience to that law was not essential to entitle them to the blessings promised by the Gospel. It was important to remove all uneasiness on this point from the minds of the Gentile Christians at Rome; for otherwise

* Verse 28.

the design of the Apostle to support them against the fear, or the endurance of sufferings, by the view of the promised blessings, would be defeated; inasmuch as they might doubt whether they were themselves authorized to expect the enjoyment of those blessings, unless they became proselytes to Judaism as well as to the Gospel.

The Apostle therefore remarks on that subject in the 29th and 36th verses. I shall not here enter upon an examination of the meaning of the several clauses of those verses, as time would not permit, and my present purpose does not demand it. Suffice it to observe generally, that the Apostle designs to impress upon their minds the *certainty of the title of all who love God, whether Jew or Gentile*, to the blessings of the New Dispensation; and for that purpose he concisely and forcibly enumerates the proofs of the Divine intention formed and declared before the promulgation of the Gospel, to confer those blessings on both, upon equal terms, without subjection to the Mosaic law;—an intention which he had already proved and explained at large in the preceding parts of his Epistle.

Having thus maintained their title to look for such blessings for themselves, according to the purpose of God, the Apostle proceeds to show how confident should be their expectation of enjoying them, in defiance of opposition of any kind from any other quarters.

For, says he, "What shall we say then to those things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

To strengthen their confidence, he directs their view to what God had already done for them. God had already given them a most inestimable pledge, in the gift of His own Son;—by which they should be assured that all other blessings would follow, agreeably to His promise,—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also freely give us all things."† And he triumphantly asks, "Who should accuse those whom God had justified? Or who should condemn those for whom Christ had died; yea, rather for whom He had risen again; and being seated at the right hand of God, made intercession?"‡ God and Christ alone possessed the power of judging; and from them *all who love God* will meet with pardon and acceptance, and are safe from condemnation.

Such appears to be the course of remark which leads the Apostle to the animated address to the Roman Christians contained in our text.

Before giving the explanation of it which is deemed correct, it will be proper to ascertain particularly the meaning of the words with which it commences: "Who shall *separate* us from the *love of Christ?*"

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* Verse 31. † Verse 32. ‡ Verses 33, 34.

What is the meaning of *the love of Christ?*

And what is that of the *separation* referred to?

The "love of Christ" may mean either the love of the Christian for Christ, or His love for them.

Some commentators understand the expression in the former sense,—of *their* love for *Him*,—and not without reasons of considerable weight. For the Apostle had been speaking of the privileges of those who loved God, and would be naturally led to remark on the loss of those privileges, if they ceased to love Him; and also their being exposed by their adherence to Him to the trials and perils mentioned, had an obvious tendency to impair or destroy *their* attachment to Him, but did not seem clearly to be calculated to affect *His* love for them. On that interpretation of the language the purport of the question would be, "Who, or what shall destroy our love for Christ and His religion, or induce us to abandon them?"

Yet it must be acknowledged that the expression of *separating a man from his own love for another*, appears harsh and unusual. And it may therefore be most proper to understand the *love of Christ* to be *His love for His people;* proofs of which are stated in the verses immediately preceding this.

But, when we consider what the *being separated from His love* must mean, we shall be led to another interpretation of the clause, very similar in *effect* to that already given to it.

The being *separated from His love*, then, it is believed, does not allude to any supposed danger that the *Redeemer would*, under any circumstances, *withdraw* His love from *His people*, those who really were and continued to be such, but to the hazard to which they were exposed, of being constrained by their dangers and sufferings to renounce His service, and thereby lose His love, in consequence of being no longer the proper objects of it. I state three reasons in support of this position.

1. It best suits the general design of the Apostle in the whole passage. From the introduction of the subject of their sufferings in the 17th verse, unto the verse now under examination, he seeks to guard them against being induced thereby to renounce the religion, by the profession of which those sufferings were brought upon them. The apprehended influence of such sufferings upon themselves, and not upon the love of Christ for His people was, then, what the Apostle kept in view.

2. Nothing mentioned in this verse could have the most remote tendency to destroy or diminish Christ's love for them, in any other manner than by inducing them to desert Him and His religion, and thereby forfeit His love. Their endurance of the various afflictions and perils mentioned, in consequence of being His disciples, so far from exposing them to any risk of being

deprived of His love, would on the contrary, if they, notwithstanding, continued steadfast in the faith, render them more worthy objects of His favor.

3. The same expression of "being *separated from His love*" does not occur in any other passage. But the meaning of it may be ascertained from the explanation given of some expressions of an opposite sense. In the Gospel of St. John, Chap. xv. 9, 10, our Lord said to His Disciples, "As the Father hath loved me, so have *I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.*"

Now if they *continued and abode in His love for them* by keeping His commandments, it is obvious that they would be separated from it by violating those commandments. So in Jude, v. 20, 21, that Apostle says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

They were to keep in the love of God by building themselves in their faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost. By the opposite course they would be separated from His love. On these principles I consider the meaning of the first clause of the 34th verse to be, "who, or what shall induce or impel us to depart from Christ and His religion, and thereby forfeit His love?"

To proceed, then, with the explanation of the passage in our text.

The Apostle had, as was before remarked, introduced, in the 17th verse, the subject of the sufferings of Christians cautiously, in order to avoid shocking the feelings of those to whom he wrote. He now returns to the subject then introduced. But having in the intervening verses impressively represented to them those exalted Gospel privileges and blessings, from which they would derive hope, consolation, assistance, and support, he no longer deems it necessary to observe the same caution.

And confident of the powerful influence of the motives thus held out to them by the Gospel for adhering to their holy faith, he sets forth their dangers and sufferings in full force; and in the face of all these, animates them to steadfast fidelity to their Saviour. For to this effect he proceeds in language in which he unites himself with the Roman Christians. "Blessed then as we Christians are, and supplied with such powerful motives to faithfulness, who, or what shall induce us to forsake Christ, and thereby be separated from His love? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Shall any sufferings which we endure, though they be so severe that we may say with the servants of God in former ages, "For Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter?" To this arousing ques-

tion he makes for them himself the encouraging reply, expressive of his firm confidence in their steadfastness, and that, through the grace of Christ, who had loved them, they would triumphantly rise superior to all their difficulties and trials. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "For, I am persuaded that neither" the fear of "death," "nor" the love of "life," "nor" the enmity and opposition of evil "angels," nor of "principalities, nor of powers, nor things present, nor things to come;" nor the "height" of prosperity, nor the "depth" of affliction, "nor any other creature" shall be able to drive us to a course which will "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Some inferences from this view of the whole passage were to conclude this discourse.

(I.) In the first place, I remark, that in our text and the two following verses, the Apostle does not seem to intend laying down any *doctrine* in relation to the possibility that a Christian may or may not fall from a state of grace in which he has been once truly placed.

It is not *doctrine*, but *exhortation and excitement to perseverance*, that he addresses to the Roman Christians. The principle which has been drawn and supposed to be proved from this passage especially, is inconsistent with many passages in the different Epistles of the same Apostle, in which he strongly expresses his

alarm lest Christians should be induced to fall away from Christ, anxiously warns them of their danger, and endeavors to guard them against it.

It is inconsistent with the design of the Apostle even in this very passage itself. From the first introduction of the subject of the sufferings to which Christians were exposed by their religion, he evidently labors under an apprehension lest they should be thereby so alarmed and intimidated as to renounce their faith, to protect themselves from danger and distress. To prevent an effect so destructive to their eternal welfare, he forcibly and impressively sets before them the various blessings bestowed by the Gospel, from which they would derive hope, comfort, strength, and animation adequate to sustain them under all their trials, but of which, likewise, they would be deprived by apostacy.

Nothing could be better adapted to confirm them in their steadfastness than the consideration of these powerful motives to perseverance, the influence of which on their minds was rendered more lively, impressive, and animating, by the strong confidence in them expressed by the Apostle himself, that blessed as they thus were, they would not be induced by any suffering or temptation, to follow a course which would deprive them of the love of their Redeemer. Viewed in this light, the passage possesses the highest beauty, consistency, and force.

But in what language *should* it be described, were

the interpretation given by many to it correct; and which in effect appears to result in this, that the Apostle, after manifesting his apprehensions on account of their danger, and arming them against its effects by suggesting the most powerful motives furnished by Christianity, concludes his address on the subject by giving them instructions, which would render the suggestion of *motives* to faithfulness needless, and wholly destroy their use and efficacy, as from their nature they can only operate on a being possessing a free will to be influenced by them; which concluding instruction is, that the danger of which he spoke was indeed imaginary; for that it was a doctrine of the religion which he was commissioned to teach that the *Christian* would be *so supported by Divine power*, that he *could not* fall away, so as to lose the favor of God, and his own final salvation.

(II.) But though the Gospel does not teach the doctrine that the Christian will *certainly*, through Divine power, persevere and be finally saved, yet it presents to him the most *persuasive motives* to perseverance, and offers him *powerful* and *amply sufficient aids to enable him to continue "faithful unto death."* And thus he is placed in the most favorable state in which a being designed for probation can be placed.

Were he to be *certainly* maintained in perseverance by *Divine power*, there could be no probation. Yet the life of the Christian is represented in the Scriptures

to be a trial during its whole continuance. To adapt his condition to the accomplishment of such a design was essential; and it is so adapted with the most striking skill. To be capable of probation, man must be endowed with freedom of will and action. He is not to be maintained in the way of salvation by a controlling Divine power, for then his perseverance could not be any ground of approbation, or worthy of reward. He is to be led by the influence of motives operating on his mind as a rational and moral being, but which he is enabled to yield to or disregard at his own choice.

Indeed, from the very nature of motives, they can operate only as before mentioned, on beings endowed with such freedom of choice. Accordingly, mark the strength of those motives to perseverance which the Apostle enumerates in the passage which we have considered. They result from the exalted and never-ending glory which is promised as our reward;—from the ample means provided, in the aids of God's Holy Spirit and the protection of His Providence, to secure our attainment of it, if we do not perversely cast it from us;—from the confidence which we are entitled to cherish that God will certainly bestow those blessings, because He has promised them, and is all-powerful, and faithful to His promises; and because He has already given such wonderful proofs of His love for us. What more powerful and persuasive motives could be offered?

But while sufficient is thus presented to excite us to the ardent pursuit of the blessings set before us, and to secure our success in it, activity is required from us. To the influence of those motives we must yield. The heavenly aid supplied to us, it is incumbent on us to employ. The power communicated is God's, but the responsibility for using or neglecting it is ours. And nothing is held out to us by God that at all tends to diminish the inducement to prayer, watchfulness, and exertion on our part, or the continued necessity of our performing those duties.

(III.) I remark, in the last place, that the *consolation* of the Christian is likewise as well secured as is consistent with a state of trial. His consolation must depend upon the grounds which he possesses for an assured hope of not being disappointed in the attainment of the great salvation proposed as the object of his desires and pursuits. As the foundation of such a hope he has the promise of the Divine protection, and assurance of the aid of the Holy Spirit, which shall be sufficient for him. He has the faithfulness, the power, the love of God in which to repose his confidence. He is assured that this gracious Being will never leave nor forsake His people.

He is supplied with a test by which he may satisfactorily ascertain whether he is himself among them, by examining whether he possesses those Christian graces

to which, through the mercy of God, and for the merits of the Redeemer, the reward of eternal life is promised. And if on the result of this examination he discovers that the Christian character has by Divine grace been formed in his soul, he has ample reason for a "full assurance of hope" that he is an object of the Divine love;—and consequently, the most solid foundation for consolation and joy.

Without possessing that character, indeed he cannot, nor was it intended that he should enjoy those blessings. Is he disposed to require, as the needful support of his consolation, not only this evidence of his being *now* in favor with God, and the assurance that God will not forsake him, and leave him destitute of sufficient aid for working out his salvation, but also the additional assurance that he will be *certainly* secured by Divine favor in *future* from falling from this state through any trials which may assail him; because he thinks that without such an assurance, doubts concerning his final fate will often harass his mind?

Let him reflect that one great design of God in promulgating and establishing the Gospel was to reform mankind, and to improve them continually in virtue; to qualify them for the enjoyments of heaven, and that their sense of security and comfort is not to be promoted by means unfriendly to the accomplishment of this design.

Now the assurance which he seeks would present a great obstacle to that accomplishment, inasmuch as it would strongly tend to produce negligence and inactivity, to which men are, by nature, already too much inclined in spiritual concerns. The certainty of being finally secure would lead them to rest satisfied with their present attainments in virtue, and indispose them for the exertion requisite to advance them to a higher state of improvement, and even to maintain them in their present one.

Such an assurance, therefore, it is believed the Scriptures do not promise, and God did not intend to give.

SERMON.

ON THE MANNER OF RECEIVING AND IMPROVING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

"Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people are still talking *of thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before me as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouths they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not."—*Ezekiel*, xxxiii. 30–32.

The manner in which we should receive and improve the religious instruction communicated in the public worship of God, ought to be seriously considered.

It is a mean of grace Divinely appointed, and peculiar to the Church of God. Out of that Church it was unknown. To receive it is an important blessing, designed to promote our spiritual improvement, and well adapted for that purpose. But it depends on the use

* Marginal translation. See Secker I., 189; and Lowth in loco.

which we make of it, whether, instead of promoting the welfare of our souls, it may not increase our condemnation.

Take heed, our Lord therefore said in His explanation of the parable of the Sower, "Take heed *what*—take heed *how* ye hear."*

The faults of the Jews, described in our text, will give us much instruction on this interesting subject.

The office of the Prophets in the Jewish Church was not confined to delivering the extraordinary messages of God, and predicting, by Divine inspiration, the events of future times. These were only parts of the duties performed by them. But they were also the ordinary preachers of righteousness to that people; teaching them, by Divine authority, the lessons of religious morality, whereby the dispositions of their hearts might be corrected and improved, and their conduct regulated.

For this purpose the people assembled and sat before them, in the usual posture of disciples coming to hear the instructions of their master or teacher. To this part of the Prophetic office our text appears especially to relate.

The Prophet Ezekiel was called by God to perform that office for the Jews who had been carried away from

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St. Mark, iv. 24; St. Luke, viii. 18.

their own country by Nebuchadnezzar, and remained in captivity at Babylon.

It might have been expected that while suffering under the severe calamities brought upon them by God, as a punishment for their sins, and which had been foretold them by Jeremiah, they would have been excited to attend with suitable dispositions and motives to the Divine messages communicated to them by the Prophet, and to have followed his instructions. But they appear to have fallen even then into that error which was at every period very prevalent in their nation, and produced fatal effects; the error of confining their religion to external acts of worship.

Our text contains a striking and lively representation given by the Almighty to His Prophet, of the manner in which they sought after, and received His instructions; and censures them for their neglect of those duties which were most essential to render their services acceptable to God.

And, my Brethren, human nature is the same now as it was in that age.

Many are still prone to the same error into which the Jews fell. The representation contained in our text will apply to *a great part* of a Christian congregation, as accurately as it did to a Jewish assembly. And when we review its different parts, we shall perceive

that the religion of too many among ourselves is confined to those particulars which *they* likewise performed, and in other respects is as *defective* as theirs was.

To receive that instruction which the passage is well calculated to give, let us consider,

(I.) What they *did;*—and,

(II.) What they are censured for *omitting.*

(I.) As to what they *did.*

For anything that they did, they do not seem to have been reproved. It is not declared to be wrong. They are reproved for not having done other things which were essential They did not do all that was required, or did not do it in a proper manner. Their service fell short of what was due.

"Son of man," the text begins, "the children of thy people still are talking of thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses."

The translation in the text of our common Bibles is "still are talking *against* thee." But in reading the verse I have used the translation in the margin of our larger Bibles; which is of equal authority with the other, and is generally considered in this instance as most correct. And it is indeed more agreeable to the tenor of the whole passage. For as the Jews were evidently pleased with hearing the Prophet, as they incited each other to go and receive his instructions, as they

were eager in attendance upon him, it is probable that their remarks to each other in their conversations were not unfavorable to him.

The fact seems to have been that they were struck and pleased with the vehement and energetic eloquence by which the Prophet appears from his writings to have been distinguished; and perhaps the extraordinary and important messages which he often communicated from God interested them, and excited their curiosity. He was therefore constantly the subject of their conversation "*by the walls;*" that is, in their places of public resort; the gates of their cities being the places at which the greater part of their business was anciently transacted; and also "*in the doors of the houses,*" or in their private intercourse.

The interest thus felt in the Prophet, and the admiration expressed of his eloquence and instructions, might easily be mistaken for an attachment to the religion itself, whose doctrines and precepts he was commissioned to teach, and as an evidence of the influence which that religion had over them.

Much of the same disposition, we well know, is found among Christians. How much greater attention is too often paid to the eloquence, the style, the delivery of the teachers, than to the all-important truths which are the subjects of their discourses! With what zeal and earnestness are the merits or defects of those teachers

often canvassed, while little regard is paid to the duty of reflecting upon and applying to ourselves the instructions which they have delivered!

How strong a partiality is frequently felt, and warmly expressed for particular teachers, by those who give little other evidence of attachment to religion!

It is not designed to condemn those feelings of preference, or the free and candid examination of the merits or faults of Christian Ministers, as being wrong in themselves. But let them not interfere with real duties. Let them not be mistaken for evidence of attachment to religion, or of an experimental acquaintance with it. They are met with often where religion has obtained no influence over the heart.

Indeed, my Brethren, the more completely your attention is withdrawn from your preacher himself, and fixed upon the message which he is delivering to you from the word of God, the more fully your subsequent reflections are employed to impress upon your hearts the edifying instructions received from him, so that your dispositions may be thereby improved and your conduct directed, instead of confining your thoughts to the merits or defects of the *manner* in which those instructions have been addressed to you,—the greater, you may believe, is your advancement in religion, and the greater additional improvement you may expect from uniting in religious worship.

When you come to this sacred place, your business is not with *us*, but with *your God.* When you depart from it, your minds should be employed, not upon us, but upon His commands, or the other parts of His revealed will which have been declared to you.

We are but humble instruments commissioned by Him to lead your devotions, and to deliver to you the joyful message of the Gospel; offering to you the forgiveness of your sins, reconciliation to God, and eternal life, through the merits of the Redeemer:—declaring to you the terms of repentance, faith, and obedience annexed to that offer, and required to be performed on your part: and urging you, by the terrors and the mercies of God, and a regard for your own everlasting welfare, to secure the offered blessings, by complying with the reasonable terms proposed.

To God your devotions must be addressed;—by God the noble offers just mentioned are made. "We then," to use the language of St. Paul, "are *ambassadors* for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," and "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* Let your view then be carried, as it ought to be, beyond the ambassador, and fixed on the august Sovereign by whom he has been deputed, and on the gracious message borne by him.

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* 2 Cor. v. 20.

The Prophet is next informed by God that the children of His people, the captive Jews, "speak one to another, every man to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord."

Thus they appear to have been earnest in exciting each other to assemble together before the Prophet to hear the word of God. A part of their conduct which was laudable, and worthy of the imitation of every Christian; each of whom should zealously, though with prudence, use the influence which he may possess over others, and is especially bound so to do with respect to those who are nearly connected with him, or under his authority, for the purpose of leading them to pay that worship which is due to the Lord of Heaven and Earth; and to receive from it the instruction in their duty, and grace to perform, which are so important to the general welfare of society, as well as to their own temporal and eternal happiness.

St. Paul, therefore, inculcates upon all Christians the duty of thus inciting each other to every good work. "Let us consider one another," says he, "to *provoke* one another unto *love,* and *to good works.* Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but *exhorting one another;* and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

* Heb. x. 24, 25.

Thus incited by each other, the captive Jews came together to hear the instructions of their Prophet. They sat before him as disciples before their master, and listened with attention to the word of God which he declared to them. In this their conduct was conformable to the Divine commands. By thus assembling together for religious exercises, they expressed their homage and declared their subjection to God; and received information of His will, to which they were expected to pay obedience. In like manner, Christians are to assemble together to pay their worship, their adoration and praise to the Deity; to present to Him their petitions; to hear His Holy word read and explained.

And in thus assembling for these purposes, they perform a duty acceptable to God. But let it be always remembered that though this external worship of God is itself an important duty, the performance of which He strictly enjoins, yet it is required principally as a *means* to a higher and *nobler* end: to render our hearts holy and devoted to the love of Him, and to lead us to conform our lives to His commands.

Further: the Jews not only assembled together to hear the Prophet's instructions, but they appear to have taken a lively interest in this religious exercise. They attended to him with pleasure, and even with a high degree of *delight.* They expressed their gratification, "for with their mouth they showed much love;" they

were enraptured with the music of his voice, and his energetic and commanding eloquence; "he was unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." This delight which was felt by the Jews in participating in the Divine ordinances is described also by the Prophet Isaiah; in a passage, however, in which it must be observed, he was, notwithstanding, directed to reprove them with severity for their transgressions. "Cry aloud," said the Almighty to that Prophet; "spare not: lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask me of the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."*

To "seek the Lord," and to "approach to Him," mean to draw nigh to Him in the use of His ordinances, or other religious exercises; in prayer, in reading or hearing His word, or in any other ways by which a knowledge of His will may be obtained, and His favor secured. In these they sought Him *daily*, and took delight in engaging in them.

We have now seen, my Brethren, that the Jews were much interested in hearing from the Prophet the word

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* Isaiah, lviii. 1, 2.

of God, so that they made him and his discourses the constant subject of their conversations in public and in private; that they zealously incited each other to attend upon him, and receive his instructive lessons; that they assembled before him in great numbers for that purpose; and that they heard him with attention, and received great delight from this pious employment.

And are there not many, *very many*, Christians whose zeal and love of God carry them not a step beyond these particulars? All of whose religion is confined to these few things, which were so earnestly practiced by the captive Jews spoken of by God in our text, and who are inclined to believe that they have made very considerable advances in a Christian life.

There is no doubt that many comfort themselves with that belief. Yet in our text, God Himself declares that all this is insufficient and unsatisfactory to Him. The main scope of the passage is, not to commend the Jews for what they *did*, though *all* that they did was, at least, *innocent*, and the greater part of it in itself highly laudable; but to reprove them for their *defects*, which rendered all their outward zeal, their expressions of love, and their delight in uniting in the external worship of God, unavailing to them, and unpleasing to Him.

From the grounds of the censure passed upon them,

we may perceive what further is requisite to make our services acceptable. To consider these, was proposed as the second head of this Discourse.

(II.) The Jews are censured in our text for three great deficiencies in their services.

1. For their want of sincerity; "with their mouth they showed much love, but their heart went after their covetousness."

2. For the improper motive which led them to attend on the Prophet; they went for *entertainment*, not *edification;* the Prophet "was to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument;" and

3. For the transient impression made by his instructions upon their hearts, so that they soon forgot and neglected to make the proper use of those instructions for improving their dispositions, and correcting their manners, "they *heard* his words, but would not *do* them."

1. They were not *sincere.* Before remarking, however, upon this point, it may be properly observed that the words translated in our text "with the mouth they show much love," admit also another interpretation, that is, "with their mouth *they make jests*," and they are so translated in the margin of our Bibles. Hence, some interpreters have thought the meaning to be that

the Jews ridiculed the discourses of the Prophet, and jested upon them. That is not the sense in which I view the passage in this Discourse; but I mention it for the purpose of introducing a remark on a practice which it is to be feared is not very uncommon.

If that be the true meaning of the words, the Jews were guilty of the great fault of making the most solemn and awful truths, truths, too, declared to them in the name, and by the authority, of God Himself, the subjects of merriment. Many, also, of those who attend the religious assemblies of the Christian Church are sometimes disposed to divert themselves with the most serious and important exhortations; and find that disposition, indeed, more strongly excited, the more solemnly and earnestly their duties are pressed upon them.

This sometimes arises, we may charitably hope, merely from thoughtless giddiness; but sometimes, too, from a bad and corrupt heart: and not unfrequently they indulge this propensity, because they feel their conscience roused and producing alarm, and they unwisely desire to obtain relief from these painful feelings by preventing serious reflection upon the exhortations which have caused them, and endeavoring to banish the remembrance of such exhortations from their minds.

But this conduct is disrespectful to God, and is pernicious in its consequences to themselves and others.

Surely, the commands of God are entitled to a reverent attention from all. Surely, it is the greatest folly to refuse a serious regard to those important truths and duties on which our eternal happiness or misery depends.

Taking the words, however, as they stand in the text, and not in the worse sense which those in the marginal translation convey, they contain a reproof of the Jews, because their love of God and of His ordinances existed only in *profession*, and did not affect their hearts. They were such as, according to the description given by the Prophet Isaiah, "draw near to God with their mouth, and honored Him with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him;"* and, instead of being devoted to Him, were "going after their covetousness," engrossed with worldly devices of different kinds. They wished to combine, what, however, it is not practicable to combine, the love and the eager pursuit of the perishable vanities of the world with the service of God: paying to *Him* no other homage than such as did not interfere with their procuring and enjoying *them*.

How inconsistent this is with a true and acceptable devotion to God, the weakest understanding may readily perceive. That devotion is rendered to a Being who sees into the inmost recesses of our souls, and approves

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* Isaiah, xxix. 13.

or rejects our homage according as He finds our affections engaged in it, or separated from it. "I, the Lord," says he, "search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."* It is the heart of His professing servants which He principally regards; and if that be wrong, their outward worship is but a vain oblation, which can never ascend up acceptably before Him. He is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. This admirable and interesting truth is readily acknowledged by our understandings; happy will it be for us, if it is suitably impressed upon our hearts!

2. The second defect of the Jews, in attending to the religious lessons of the Prophet, was in the motive by which they were actuated. They went for entertainment, not for edification. The Prophet was to them, as we have heard, "as a very lovely song."

Now, though it is very allowable to desire and seek for gratification while at the same time we receive instruction, *that* ought not to be the principal object in view. It is not for *entertainment* that we should come to the House of God: His public worship, and the religious instruction attending it, could never have been instituted with so low a design.

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* Jer. xvii. 10.

The main purposes for which we assemble here, and upon which our minds should be intently fixed, are to pay our homage to our great Creator and Redeemer, and receive His grace and blessing; to be informed or reminded of our natural state of alienation from God; of our natural sinfulness and corruption; of our actual transgressions; of the awful consequences to which we were thereby exposed from the righteous sentence of a justly offended God; of our reconciliation to Him, and redemption from the threatened punishment by the all-sufficient Sacrifice and prevailing Intercession of the Blessed Saviour; of the means whereby we may secure these blessings to ourselves; of our duties; of the methods of obtaining the Divine grace necessary to incline and enable us to perform them; of what we have to hope or fear with respect to our eternal state in another world.

With such deeply interesting and awfully important subjects before us, and demanding our attention, can we receive the approbation of our own judgments and consciences, when we permit our minds to be withdrawn from the serious consideration of them, and to be intent on obtaining—and, perhaps, dissatisfied at not obtaining—the very inferior, the comparatively *trifling* enjoyment of having our ears gratified, our fancy pleased, our understandings exercised, and agreeable emotions

excited, by ingenious and convincing reasoning, by an impressive or splendid eloquence, by a graceful delivery?

A great regard for these is too apt to draw us from the important business for which we are assembled. And religion has not yet produced its proper influence upon our hearts, unless we feel more interested in the great truths which it presents to us, than in the pleasing manner in which they may be explained or enforced.

There is, indeed, a delight arising from sincere devotion, and from the consideration of the great truths of Christianity, which a real Christian may properly desire, and will generally feel.

It has been graciously ordered by God that the performance of our duties, of our religious duties among the rest, should be productive of pleasure; of pleasure, too, of the purest and most exalted kind. But this delight cannot exist unless the affections of the heart are engaged, for the occasion at least, in the duty performed; and also is very different from the entertainment of which we have been speaking, and which is so much sought after.

We must add, likewise, that even this delight should not be mistaken for religion, or regarded as a conclusive proof of Christian character. It may be, and often is, excited in breasts where real religion has not found an

abode. The view of a numerous assembly solemnly engaged in offering, with one accord, their praises, their prayers, and their thanksgivings to the Almighty Maker and Governor of the universe, may kindle a glow of animated devotion in one before unacquainted with the delightful feeling; but, alas! it may as speedily be extinguished, without leaving, in its effects, the least vestige of its existence.

In like manner may delight be excited by the contemplation of those great truths which religion discloses, while they, notwithstanding, do not obtain any durable influence over our hearts. What, indeed, can be imagined more calculated to raise in our minds the most pleasing and delightful emotions than those discoveries which religion has made to us, of an Almighty Being, self-existing and eternal, of unbounded wisdom, goodness, and power; filling all space with His presence, and marking everything that occurs in His wide, extended universe; of the creation of the world by this adorable Being, with the benevolent design of bestowing happiness upon the creatures whom He formed and placed in it; of His constantly supporting and preserving it by His power; of His ruling and governing it by His Providence, extending His watchful and paternal care over the most minute as well as the greatest and most important objects in it; of His graciously raising

mankind from the depth of misery into which they had fallen by their sins, and redeeming them by the death of His own beloved Son; of His sending down to them His Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify, to guide, to support, and to comfort them; of the beauties of the morality contained in His Law and Gospel; of the eternal joys which He has prepared for them in Heaven to record their faith and obedience!

The heart must be insensible that does not experience pleasing emotions on the contemplation of these animating truths. But if they produce only delight, the discovery of them will be of little moment to us. From each of them important duties result; and to perform these faithfully must be our chief aim; the duties, I mean, of grateful love to God for His goodness and mercy; of trust in His Providential care; of resignation to His will; of adorations of His perfections; of acknowledging our need of the Atonement made by His Son for our sins, and relying on that for the favor of God and eternal life; of seeking for and improving the influences of His grace; and aspiring after, and earnestly striving to obtain the eternal happiness which He has set before us; and of cultivating, for that purpose, those graces, and practising those virtues which He has enjoined.

3. These remarks lead us to the third defect for which

the Jews are reproved, that the instructions of the Prophet made but a transient impression, and were soon forgotten, or disobeyed, and unproductive of the designed improvement. "They heard his words but they would not do them."

Hearing, indeed, as they did, without sincerity of heart, without the desire of knowing the will of God that they might obey it; seeking, as they did, amusement and the gratification of curiosity instead of edification; it was not to be expected that the discourses of the Prophet would make any durable impression on their hearts. The effect of them passed away speedily, like the memory of a very lovely song, to which they are compared; nothing was thought of but the pleasure received from hearing them.

But, can any reasonable man believe that no further use is to be made of religious instruction? Is it of much advantage to be *informed* of our duty, unless we likewise practice it? On the contrary, we are instructed that it will increase our condemnation. "The servant who knew His Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not his Lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Our duty is to improve by the instruction received by hearing the word of God; to *attend* to it; to *reflect* upon it; to apply it to *ourselves*, that we may be made

sensible of our faults and correct them; that we may discover in what virtues we are deficient, and endeavor to acquire them. We must *do* as well as *hear* the will of God.

This is the injunction frequently repeated in the Scriptures, and without complying with it, all our hearing will be in vain; and we have no reason to expect the Divine blessing. That is promised to those only "who *hear* the word of God, and *keep* it."

By the fruits produced, must the reality of our religion be determined now; and according to them will we be judged at the great day of account, and have our eternal destiny unalterably fixed.

"Be ye therefore *doers* of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* By observing this injunction, you will lay the most secure and solid foundation for your future happiness. Of this you are assured by our

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* James, i. 22–25.

Lord Himself in the strongest and most impressive terms.

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; *for it was founded on a rock.* And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it."*

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* St. Matt. viii. 24–27.

THE END.

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